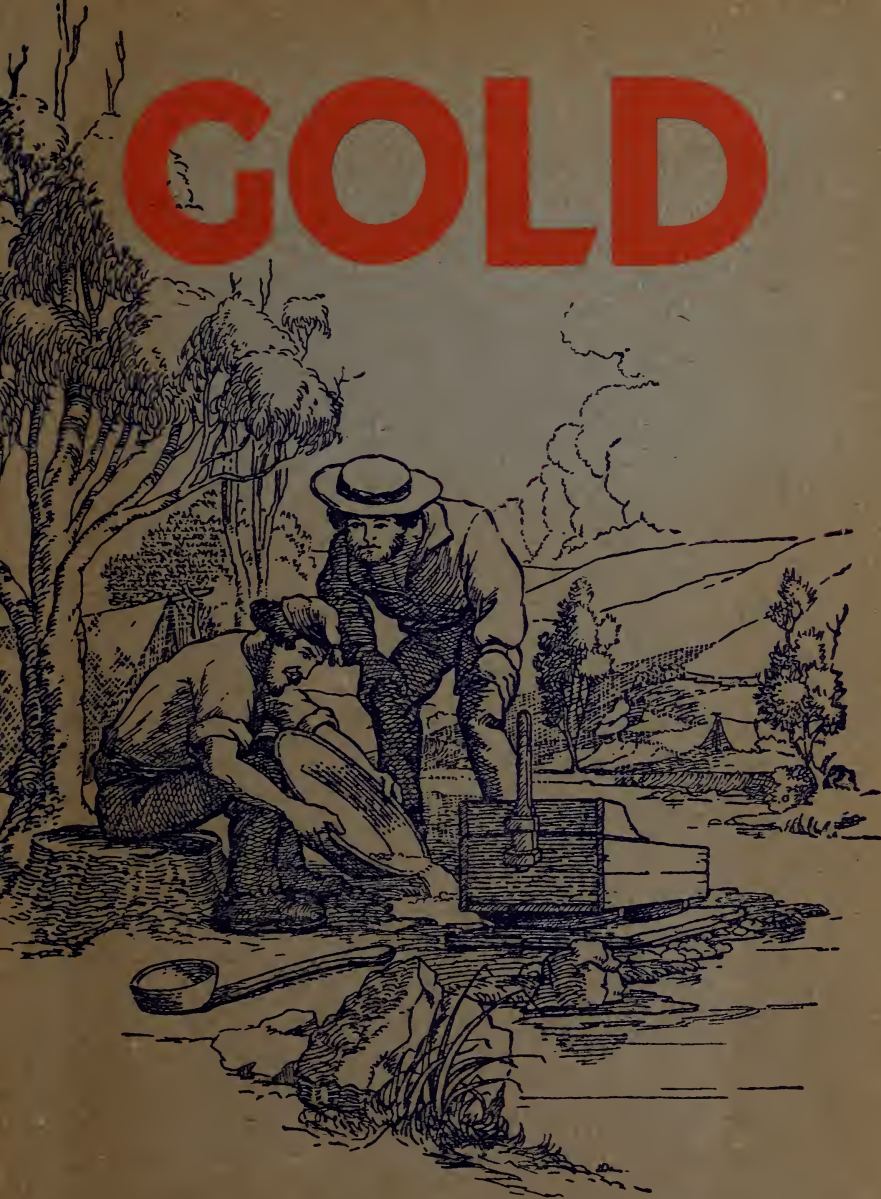


# GOLD





*Tri-nitro-toluol* – Toluol – a product of petroleum, is being produced by the Oil Industry in ever-increasing quantities to meet the Allies' demand for high explosives (T.N.T.).

Bombs, Shells, Depth Charges, Mines, all receive contributions from the Oil Industry.

Refineries are also producing in ever-increasing quantities such vitally essential products as *Butadiene*, the chief constituent of synthetic rubber; *Formaldehyde*, a petroleum resin

used in the manufacture of non-shatterable glass for nose and turret tops of bombers and fighters, whilst *new* methods of refining recently developed by Vacuum's Associates are producing improved 100 octane aviation gasolines which give greater power, speed and manoeuvrability.

*Serving the Nation on Land, Sea, and in the Air*

**VACUUM OIL COMPANY** PTY. LTD.

(INCORPORATED IN AUSTRALIA)

*The illustrations in this book, with a few exceptions, are from sketches made by S. T. Gill, a clever artist, who visited the Victorian goldfields early in the fifties. His original drawings are rare and valuable.*



*C. W. Stargraves*

# GOLD

The Romance of its Discovery  
in Australia

by

CHARLES BARRETT

*Editor of "The Swagman's Notebook"*

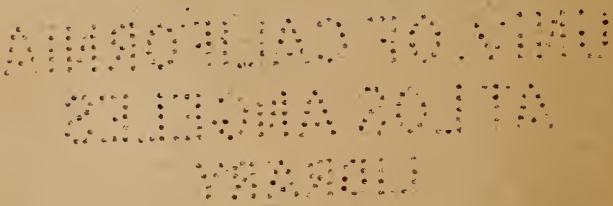
Melbourne:  
UNITED PRESS  
1944



## A DIGGERS' SONG

*With spades and picks we work like bricks  
And dig in gold formation;  
And stir our cradles with short sticks  
To break conglomeration.  
This golden trade doth not degrade  
The man of information,  
Who shovels nuggets with the spade  
Of beauteous conformation.  
What mother can her infant stock  
View with more satisfaction,  
Than we our golden cradles rock,  
Which most love to distraction.  
Let those who dare try thwart our care  
At our gold occupation;  
They with bewilderment will stare  
At golden incubation.*

*"Notes of a Gold Digger"—James Bonwick.*



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# FOREWORD

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## GOLD STILL ON ITS THRONE

Gold seems to be in no danger of losing its popularity after the war.

Man has always been fascinated by gold. One of these days, he may scorn it as a relic of barbarism, but not in our time. Pointers—strong ones—indicate that gold's prestige and value is assured after the war—within bounds. Gold's place in the world's money system is likely to be amended—in the social sense, improved. Gold will retain its throne—but as a constitutional monarch, rather than a tyrant.

It was gold that played a big part in putting Australia on the map. Lure of the metal was largely responsible for Australian population being doubled and then re-doubled in the 20 years after gold was discovered. Forty years later, the population of Western Australia leapt seven-fold in two decades. But for the gold rushes, and the development which they stimulated, many of us might never have been born south of the equator at all.

It was exports of gold that helped to provide the capital used to develop Australia—to pay for the imports of necessaries and equipment last century. It was gold, amongst other things, that helped to pull us out of the great depression of our own time. Gold exports were used towards squaring that nightmare "adverse trade balance" brought on by a period of lavish borrowing and importing.

From Australian soil to date there has been won gold worth £761,000,000. The recorded quantity

(to September, 1943) is 162,441,883 fine ounces, worth £760,820,220. Some is unrecorded.

Just before this war caused a postponement of mining, gold ranked as our largest export after wool and wheat. Australian gold production reached its all-time record value in 1940, £17,519,950 for the year's production of 1,643,999 fine oz., the price touching £10/14/- an oz.

Record year's quantity was in 1903 when the yield of 3,898,000 fine oz. was worth £16,302,900—at the old price of £4/5/- a fine oz., which ruled for more than a hundred years until 1931.

These riches went to pay the wages of miners and all who contribute directly or indirectly to their work and needs. Dividends to shareholders in our gold mines had passed £3,000,000 a year just before war came. Western Australia was, and is, the premier producer. Her pre-war output was £12,000,000 annually; Victoria's, not quite £2,000,000. Lake View and Star, employing more than 1200 men on the Golden Mile, was leading producer, winning 170,000 oz. or the best part of £2,000,000 a year.

Unlike crops that perish if unreaped, gold does not deteriorate if left in the ground. It can be gathered once, and once only. It will still be there when the war ends—to help towards paying our overseas obligations and to give post-war employment.

How much there is, no man knows. Every old miner—in fact every mining engineer—argues that there is more gold in the ground than ever came out of it. The problem is to find it. For instance, the powerful Bendigo Mines company, less than 10 years ago, spent half-a-million and found nothing worth



while. Nearby, the North Deborah, with only £24,000 of capital, has won 53,000 oz. and paid dividends of £355,200 in the last few years.

Financial authorities in Britain, America and Australia believe that gold will hold its place after the war. America and Britain hold four-fifths of the existing stock of gold won from the earth. By 1943 America had accumulated gold worth 22 billion dollars out of the world total of 30 billion dollars. The British Empire, Russia and the United States are the principal producers of gold. Their pre-war production was (in Australian currency values) £206,000,000, £49,000,000 and £45,000,000 a year, a total of £300,000,000 out of a world total of £384,000,000. These powers are most unlikely to decry the value of their holdings.

Nor has mankind reached a sufficient stage of mutual trust to rely wholly upon I.O.U.'s, credits and book entries in international dealings. Gold is durable, of unvarying quality; no other commodity is as suitable for money. The exact price, now £10/9/- a fine oz. in Australia, depends on the exchange rate. Similar factors apply in Britain and America. Because reductions of international exchange rates cause the ills of deflation, the balance of evidence is that the price of gold is likely to stay where it is or go even higher, rather than fall.

Much has been learned about management of credit and monetary systems, but gold will remain, not as the dictator, but as the solid foundation under credit.

*John W. M. Eddy*

(Financial Editor of the Melbourne Herald;  
Melbourne University Lecturer 1931-1941 in  
Banking, Currency and Finance and  
Financial Organisation.)

## **Early Discoveries**

Who first discovered gold in Australia we shall never know. On a map of what was then terra incognita, drawn between 1530 and 1536, the North-West coast of Australia is named "Costa d'Ouro," or "Gold Coast." This ancient parchment, known as "The Dauphin Chart," is preserved in the map section of the British Museum, London. It is the work of a Portuguese cartographer, who probably had still earlier maps to aid his little knowledge, which further was eked out by imagination.

That Australia was marked on early Dutch charts as "Provincia Aurifera" because William Dampier had discovered gold on the North-West coast in 1688, investigation has proved to be an incorrect assertion. Actually the earliest authentic discoveries of gold were made in eastern Australia and during the first half of last century.

In August, 1788, a convict, named James Daley, declared that he had found gold, and, in proof of his story, displayed a piece of stone which appeared to be impregnated with the precious metal. At first, even under coercion, he flatly refused to reveal to the authorities where the find had been made. Later, Governor Phillip appeared, and compelled Daley to walk before him, threatening instant death should he attempt to run away or deceive His Excellency. The wretched man, being fearful of the lash, made a confession — that he had filed down portion of a yellow metal buckle, mixed with the filings particles of gold filed off a guinea piece, and then blended the whole with clay which he baked, or otherwise made stone-like. It is not improbable that Daley was the first discoverer of gold in this country. His confession, as some believe, may have been untrue; certainly it was extorted through fear, not of death, but the lash. The Governor was despotic, with unlimited

power over convicts, who formed the major proportion of Port Jackson's population.

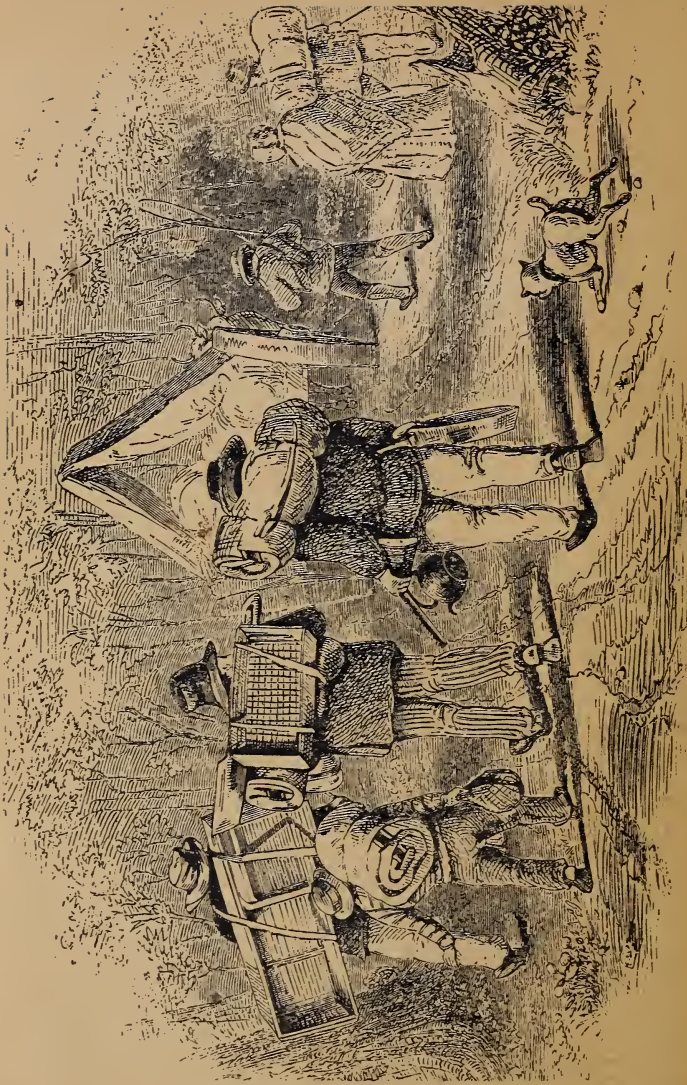
When the road to Bathurst was being constructed, in 1814, men in the chain-gangs found gold in considerable quantity, but were threatened with flogging if they broadcast their discovery. In 1825, a convict was punished with the cat-o'-nine-tails for having in his possession gold which he stoutly maintained had been found in the bush. It must have been stolen, Authority argued, and on an unproven charge, the unfortunate man suffered cruel punishment. Was Authority unaware of the fact that a land surveyor, one James McBrien, had, two years earlier, proved the existence of real golden sand in the colony? On February 15th, 1823, McBrien made this entry in his field-book:—

“At 8 chains and 50 links to river and marked gum tree. At this place I found numerous particles of gold in the sand and in the hills convenient to the river.”

According to James Fenton (“History of Tasmania”), before the Californian discovery, a prisoner in the service of the Government at Port Arthur offered to show a deposit of gold in Van Diemen's Land on condition that he received a reward; but the Governor did not consider the colony ripe for such a revelation of treasure waiting to be dug up by any man, and the poor convict went unrewarded. In 1824, a prisoner working in a road gang at George Town, is said to have given to the magistrate a piece of gold, which the latter declared to be brass. Brass? Well, the man was rewarded by Governor Arthur with a block of land in Launceston.

In December, 1829, a free laborer offered a piece of auriferous quartz to a silversmith at Sydney. Cohen purchased it, but, like Brer Rabbit, said nothing. In the following year, a nugget of





Off to a New Rush

gold was picked up on the banks of the Fish River, not far from the spot where Surveyor McBrien had found golden grains in river sand.

### **The Governor's Fears**

Our next record is for the year 1839, when Count Paul Strzelecki found gold in the Vale of Clwydd. In a report to the New South Government he mentioned his discovery of "an auriferous sulphuret of iron, partly decomposed, yielding a very small quantity or proportion of gold sufficient to attest its presence, insufficient to repay its extraction." At the request of Sir George Gipps, Strzelecki kept the matter secret, except from his friends, the Governor being fearful of the consequences should it become known to a community which included large numbers of ticket-of-leave men and other doubtful characters. Did His Excellency imagine that a golden secret could long be kept, even by his decree? The Count made no public announcement, but he told his friends, who in strict confidence, told others, and so the news spread.

Early in 1841, the Rev. W. B. Clarke, an amateur geologist, discovered gold in the granite and quartziferous slates west of Hartley, near the heads of Cox's River and Winburndale Rivulet. A year later he made a further discovery at Wollondilly. Like the Polish Count, the reverend prospector for some time kept his discoveries to himself — and his friends, among these being James Macarthur, Esq., of Camden, and his Honor Mr. Justice Therry. In 1844, however, he made the subject a matter of communication to the then Governor, Sir George Gipps, exhibiting the gold, and was met with the decision that it would be better to "put it away, as it would lead to dangerous consequences."

An obtuse, over-cautious man, apparently, was Governor Gipps.



## California's Goldfields

California's goldfields were luring men from the ends of the earth at the close of the forties. Thousands of fortune seekers sailed from Sydney and Melbourne for San Francisco, among them being Hargraves, who will always be popularly regarded as the original discoverer of gold in Australia. Now America's El Dorado was discovered by the mere uprooting of a shrub, when a mill-race for a saw-mill was being made on Captain Sutter's land along the banks of the Sacramento. The roots of the plant gleamed with specks of gold, and a search revealed more round about the spot where it had grown. The little township of San Francisco, as soon as the discovery became known, was almost emptied of its folks, eager to get rich quick on the Sacramento. Ere long, with the influx of men from overseas, there were 100,000 people on the field.

The story of the golden-rooted bush was told around campfires and in station huts in Australia. It stirred many a dull witted shepherd's mind into thought: Why not pull up a few bushes along the creek, and do a bit of fossicking, with a stick or a crowbar? Scores of lonely men on sheep stations became idle hour prospectors around their huts and farther afield. And one, George Chapman, had good luck. In January, 1849, he arrived in Melbourne with a lump of quartz specked with shining yellow. It was examined secretly by a chemist, who declared that the specks were pure gold. Then the shepherd, who was illiterate but not a fool, took his specimen to Melbourne's leading jeweller, and Bretani made a proper assay, whose result made him eager to organise a prospecting party. Chapman, who was lodging at his house, agreed to guide the jeweller and two other men to the place where the find had been made, and they set out in a

dray, with digging tools and a stock of provisions. Bretani and his men returned to town with two specimens worth about £100. Chapman, they said, had disappeared — he turned up later at Sydney. Nothing further was done to exploit the discovery. Bretani doubtless was making a moderate fortune as a jeweller, and did not care to risk losing substance for shadow by turning his attention to gold mining.

Gold was discovered at Echunga, South Australia, in August, 1849. About the same time, a blacksmith at Berrima, New South Wales, found some golden quartz, which he took to Sydney and showed to the Colonial Secretary, offering to reveal the locality of his find on receiving a reward. Officialdom once again sought to keep the world ignorant of a notable discovery. A reward was refused, and the disappointed blacksmith went back to his anvil.

Gold was found on Cameron's run at Clunes, Victoria; also at Burbank, on the Loddon River, early in 1850. But these finds were not revealed until the following year, when Edward Hammond Hargraves made his historic discovery at Summer Hill Creek, Turon River, near Bathurst, New South Wales. This is the sedate record in the "Official History of New South Wales," published 1883:—

"Mr. Hargraves, while on a visit to California, was struck with the similarity between the richest diggings in that country and a portion of the Bathurst district, over which he had previously travelled, and on his return to Sydney he made an exploring expedition thither, which realised his expectations. Some nuggets and dust having been brought to Sydney, a rush thither at once took place. The intelligence received day by day was such as tended to increase the excitement. A nugget of 46 ozs. having been brought into town and exhibited, raised the passion for gold-seeking

to the highest pitch, and it was confirmed by the receipt of authentic intelligence that a blacksmith of Bathurst had taken 11 lbs. of gold out of one hole. The unsettling of the population which now took place affected the price of provisions, and in a fortnight the price of flour rose from £20 to £30 per ton.

“At the commencement of June such were the attractions which the prospects of accumulating a sudden fortune presented that one traveller from Bathurst to Sydney counted 1800 persons wending their way to the goldfields. In June, gold was discovered at the Turon and several other localities in the Western Districts, and in the vicinity of Goulburn; in July, 106 lbs. weight of gold in a solid mass was found by a blackfellow on Dr. Kerr’s station, near Bathurst; and in the same month gold to the value of £11,648 was sent to England. In Victoria, in October, gold was discovered. The total number of licences issued in New South Wales up to the close of October was 12,186 . . . The licence fee was 30/ per month.”

### Hargraves’ Own Story

Compare Hargraves’ vivid account of his epoch-making discovery of *payable* gold in Australia with the historian’s official prose:—

“Whilst Sir Roderick Impy Murchison (a noted British geologist, to whom Strzelecki’s specimens were submitted) is entitled to the high honour of having first publicly announced as the result of profound research and observations in geology and mineralogy that extensive goldfields must exist among the mountains of Australia, the humble individual who has the honour of penning these lines — without the slightest pretence to scientific knowledge, without having ever heard of Sir R. J. Murchison, at the time of his published opinions — is entitled to the credit,

be it much or little, of having first discovered the actual existence of the large goldfields in that country; of having first searched there, as a practical miner, or (as it would perhaps be more correct to say) 'digger'; and of having drawn the attention of the Colonial Government and people to the discovery; whence has resulted the production of millions of treasure which are now yearly pouring into the Mother country, to the enrichment both of itself and of the infant colony . . . ”

After relating his experiences in California and discoursing on the history of scientific and practical discoveries of gold in Australia, Hargraves proceeds:—

“It was with an anxious heart, therefore, that I again landed at Sydney, in the month of January, 1851. On my passage thither and immediately on my arrival, I made known to my friends and companions my confident expectations on the subject; one and all, however, derided me, and treated my views and opinions as those of a madman. Still undaunted, on the 5th of February I set out from Sydney on horseback alone to cross the Blue Mountains. On the first day I reached Penrith, a distance of about 33 miles on the western road . . . On the following morning I resumed my journey and before five o'clock ascended the pass of the Blue Mountains . . .

“After crossing these mountains I descended into the Vale of Clwydd by the pass known as Sir Thomas Mitchell's, at Mount Victoria, a noble specimen of engineering skill in a country where little else has been done to tame the savage wilderness of nature. On arriving at the valley below you lose the sandstone formation . . . The country now becomes more inviting and habitable than during the last 40 miles. Inns had been established at distances varying from 10 to 18 miles, for the convenience of squatters travelling towards



Sydney from the interior, but at the time I am speaking of the innkeepers, one and 'all, complained sadly of the poverty of the squatters generally, whom they represented to be so badly off that they could not bear the expense of stopping at their houses but commonly camped in the bush. I attempted to console one of these complainers, a Mr. Wilson, host of the Blue Mountain Inn, by telling him that I had just come from California to make a change in New South Wales, and that he would soon have more customers than he would be able to accommodate. Of course, he only laughed at me . . . .”

On the third day Hargraves reached Bathurst, and decided to visit Guyong. Attempting to make a cross cut through the bush, he lost direction and found himself in Fredericks Valley, a district which subsequently became famous for its auriferous wealth. Next day the wanderer reached Guyon and put up at the inn, kept by a sympathetic widow, Mrs. Lister, with whom Hargraves was acquainted. He confided in her, and asked for help — a guide and digging implements. “She entered with a woman’s heartiness into my views, and offered me the assistance of her son, a youth of about eighteen years of age, who, she assured me, knew the country well.” On February 12th, they set out from Guyong, Hargraves and young Lister, following down a tributary of the Summer Hill Creek, itself a tributary of the Macquarie. Now comes the dramatic part of the story:

### **Surrounded by Gold**

“After travelling a distance of about fifteen miles, I found myself in the country that I was so anxiously longing to behold again. Any recollection of it had not deceived me. The resemblance of its formation to that of California could not be doubted or mistaken. I felt myself surrounded by gold; and with tremulous anxiety panted for the





*Swinging Along With Swags and Guns*

moment of trial, when my magician's wand should transform this trackless wilderness into a region of countless wealth . . . .

"We now turned out our horses; and seated ourselves on the turf, as it was necessary to satisfy the cravings of hunger before I ventured on my grand experiment. Had that failed, but little appetite for food would have been left me. My guide went for water to drink, and, after making a hasty repast, I told him we were now in the goldfields, and that the gold was under his feet as he went to fetch the water for our dinner. He stared with incredulous amazement, and on my telling him that I would now find some gold, watched my movements with the most intense interest. My own excitement, probably, was far more intense than his. I took the pick and scratched the gravel off a schistose dyke which ran across the creek at right angles with its side; and, with a trowel, I dug a panful of earth, which I washed on the water-hole. The first trial produced a little piece of gold. 'Here it is!' I exclaimed; and I then washed five panfuls in succession, obtaining gold from all but one.

"No further proof was necessary. To describe my feelings at that eventful moment would be impossible. What I said on the instant—though, I must admit, not warranted as the language of calm reflection—has been since much laughed at. . . . 'This,' I exclaimed to my guide, 'is a memorable day in the history of New South Wales. I shall be a baronet, you will be knighted, and my old horse will be stuffed, put into a glass case, and sent to the British Museum.'

"At that instant I felt myself to be a great man. I was as mad, perhaps, at that moment, as Don Quixote his life through; and assuredly, my companion was as simple as Sancho Panza — for the good youth afterwards told me he expected I should obtain for him the honor I had promised."

## Governor Cautious

In no hurry to announce his great discovery, the gold-finder, with the assistance of young Lister and another youth, thoroughly explored the district, tracing the courses of several streams, including the Turon. Finally, Hargraves returned to Sydney, where he interviewed the Colonial Secretary, and offered, on receipt of an adequate reward, to reveal where a rich goldfield awaited development. Governor Fitzroy, to whom the matter was referred, was cautious. Let Hargraves reveal the locality, and, if it proved to be gold-bearing, then a reward would be paid, an amount in proportion to its potential value. After long delay, these terms were accepted, and S. Stutchbury, Government Geologist, proceeded to Summerhill Creek, and made a scientific investigation, which verified Hargraves' story. Before the end of May, 1851, there were 400 men on the Creek, panning dirt and getting gold, or picking out little nuggets. Some were lucky, others hardly earned their tucker. One of the lucky ones was a laborer, who had left a thirty shillings a week job to seek his fortune on the diggings. He sold a nugget for £30, in Bathurst. The news went round, and within a week the goldfields population had increased to one thousand persons.

A few enterprising men made money from storekeeping. They erected tents or small wooden buildings. And from these small beginnings the famous township of Ophir grew up. Still hopeful men flocked to the field, while disappointed diggers left to try their luck elsewhere. New arrivals, however, greatly outnumbered departures. Contemporary newspaper reports indicate that the demand for digging implements exhausted available stocks. In Melbourne, a shovel could not be purchased at any price: it was the same at



Geelong. All the shovels had been taken away to Bathurst.

Meanwhile, Hargraves had received a reward of £500, and had been appointed a gold commissioner at £1 a day, with allowances for two horses. His duty was to search for new goldfields. Among places already indicated by him as auriferous, was the wide valley of the Turon River, and soon a tide of migrant gold seekers from the south was flowing into the valley. The district, says Alexander Sutherland, in "Victoria and its Metropolis" (published in 1888) had about 4000 diggers in it, and the yield became so great that a gold escort was established by the Government. Every week a van carried gold to the value of about £12,000 to Bathurst. It was guarded on each side by a file of troopers, who, with jingling scabbards, galloped along the road, conscious of their importance—and their duty.

### **Victoria Offers Reward**

Victoria was jealous, and filled with apprehension. New South Wales was attracting laboring men in thousands. Soon there would be a dearth of manpower south of the Murray. Something had to be done about it; so a public meeting was held, on June 9th, 1851, in the Mechanics' Institute, Collins Street, Melbourne. After long discussion, the meeting decided that a reward of £200 be given to any person who should disclose the situation of a profitable goldfield not more than 200 miles distant from Melbourne.

The reward was claimed by Dr. Bruhn, a German geologist, who for months had been prospecting in Victoria, chiefly among the Pyrenees and the Jim Crow Ranges. A miserably poor political refugee from Europe, he endured hardness in his wanderings. Like the Baron von Mueller, on his botanical explorations, Dr. Bruhn rode a pony, but it was a sorry-looking beast, in keep-

ing with its owner. The unlucky geologist failed to get the reward, because the analyst's report stated that the stone of which he submitted specimens, could not be profitably worked with the appliances then available.

Two prospectors found gold at Anderson's Creek in July, 1851; and soon there were several hundreds of men on the field, earning fair wages by hard work.

By lucky chance, James William Esmond, who had driven a mail-coach between Buninyong and Horsham before going to California, after his return to Australia, met Dr. Bruhn. Esmond was camped with a mate, named Pugh, among the hills of Clunes—they were engaged on a fencing job—when the refugee geologist came along on his miserable-looking pony. While the billy boiled he talked of gold and that £200 reward that should have been his. After the Doctor's departure, the two mates decided to throw up their job and go gold-seeking. And gold they found—the Clunes diggings.

Long before this, however, Thomas Hiscock, of Buninyong, had done some prospecting among the hills and filled a matchbox with grains of gold. The news was published in the "Geelong Advertiser," in August, 1851, only one day before Esmond's discovery had been publicly announced. The Buninyong diggings came into being. But results were disappointing and many diggers moved off in the direction of Clunes, about thirty miles away.

### **Discovery of Ballarat**

"But the miners at Clunes (writes Alexander Sutherland) were passing through precisely the same stage. They were working very hard and living in tents, with a limited supply of provisions and making after all but a few shillings a day. They also were dissatisfied, and inclined to think



that this new place, Hiscock's Gully, near Buninyong, was the proper spot. They began to stream southward, and out of the meeting of these two opposite streams came the much more important discovery of Ballarat, and the origin of that famous goldfield, which to this day remains the most notable the world has ever seen.

"It is impossible to decide with any feeling of certainty who was the first to discover these rich deposits. There were many claimants of that distinction; for at least a score of men were at work within a couple of days of one another over a comparatively limited area . . . But the Committee of the Legislative Council, which gathered such evidence as could be had, assigned the priority to three men of the name of Brown, Regan and Dunlop. These men, however, were not allowed to participate in the Government reward, which was thus distributed: — Hargraves was awarded £5000, but of this sum only £2381 has ever been paid; he obtained £10,000 from the Government of New South Wales; other testimonials, public and private, raised the total of his reward to the handsome sum of about £16,000. From the Victorian Government the Rev. W. B. Clarke received £1000, and Louis John Michel £1000; Thomas Hiscock £1000, and James Esmond £1000; Dr. Bruhn £500, and others £500 among them."

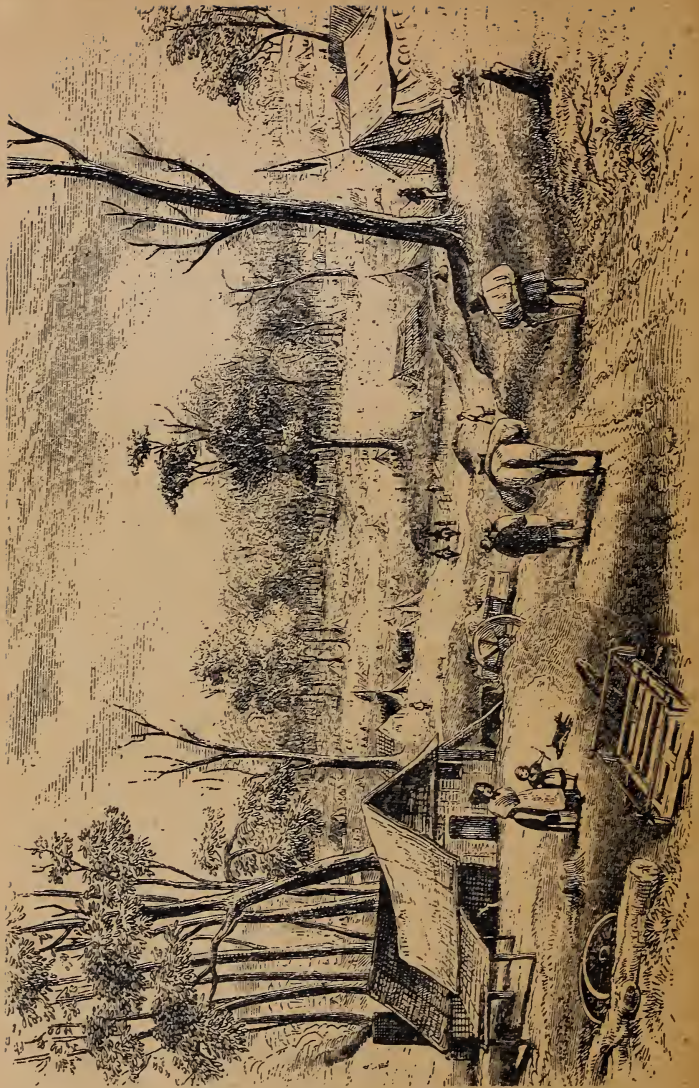
It is pleasing to one's ideas of justice to find the poor little German geologist at last receiving financial recognition; for undoubtedly he was one of the earliest discoverers of gold in Victoria.

Mount Alexander goldfield had its origin in a shepherd's discovery. Christopher Peters, employed on a sheep station in the country round the present site of Castlemaine, did a bit of prospecting while guarding the flocks. On a September day, in 1851, he found gold-bearing quartz jammed between two beds of slate. Breaking off

a piece, he took it to his hut that evening and pulverised it with a hammer. Gold glittered on the rough log table, and the man's eyes shone with joy. He shared his secret with two other shepherds and a bullock-driver. The trio, telling the boss that they were off to the diggings, left the station—and made for Specimen Gully, as they named the scene of Peters' discovery. After a month's profitable work, they announced the find in a Melbourne newspaper. Before the end of October the rush to Forest Creek, as the new field at first was called, was in full swing. At the beginning of December, gold was being received by the gold commissioners in hundredweights. Each week the escort had charge of two tons; and the total yield from Mount Alexander district for one month was valued at £360,000.

### **Gold Mania In Melbourne**

"It was not surprising, therefore," Alexander Sutherland writes, "that the gold fever of the colony was renewed in intensity. Many who had resisted the temptations of Ballarat succumbed to those of Mount Alexander; and when the eager flood of prospectors unearthed the still richer deposits of Bendigo Creek, some twenty miles to the north, the last touch was given that upset the stoicism of the coolest head. The turnkeys of all the gaols resigned, the warders of the lunatic asylum decamped. Out of forty police who were stationed in Melbourne, thirty-eight sent in their resignations for the end of December; and the New Year's holiday found a city of twenty thousand people with two constables to keep order. There were fifty-nine vessels lying in the Bay. They had 1029 seamen; 521 of these disappeared for the diggings, and the others had to be watched . . . Some vessels that had only two men apiece offered £80 a man for a crew to take them home, but that could induce nobody; £100 had



*Bendigo Creek Early in the Fifties*



as little effect; and it was only by the payment of £120 that a vessel which was bound to return to England within a given time, could bribe a common seaman to ship for a voyage, for which the ordinary rate would have been £8. The resignations of those in the civil service flowed in at such a rate that Latrobe had, on his own responsibility, and with many misgivings, to increase the salaries all round by about a half. . . .”

Excitement in Melbourne increased when several thousands of lucky diggers returned to the city for the Christmas holidays. They had money to spend, and they spent it so liberally that shopkeepers reaped a very rich harvest. Profiteering of course was rampant. Prices of goods were doubled and trebled. The diggers cheerfully paid whatever prices were demanded by greedy vendors. There was no price-fixing in those wonderful days. Men were known to light their pipes with blazing bank notes, and even to eat notes sandwiched between slices of buttered bread. When the Governor's wife, choosing a ball dress in a Melbourne shop, hesitated over paying the extravagant price demanded for the material she fancied, a digger, who was standing by the counter, said to the attendant, “Put it up for *my* missus.”

On the diggings also the miners were fleeced by storekeepers and the reprobates who conducted sly-grog shops. It is said that the police, both officers and men, “had their figure,” and there is evidence that some of them accepted bribes. They were wild times, yet often enough a sly-grog seller's tent was destroyed by the police, many of whom were ex-convicts. Monopolies of the sale of liquor were given to storekeepers who paid for the privilege—a handsome sum of money to the police inspector, or sergeant; bonuses to the constables—so we are told.

## The Bendigo Diggings

It has been settled beyond doubt, George Mackay states, in his "History of Bendigo," that gold was first discovered on Bendigo at a place known in 1851 as "The Rocks," at Golden Square. It is said that a man named Johnston picked up a piece of gold in October, 1851; further, that shepherds found gold at the locality mentioned, though the discovery has also been credited to their employers, Gibson and Fenton. The latter declared that they saw gold among the roots of a big grass-tussock, bared by the wash of flood waters.

A rush occurred, but the results of digging proved so disappointing that soon only a few men remained; but they were successful in Golden Gully; and diggers at Forest Creek hearing the good news, a second rush took place.

When the story of Ballarat was noised abroad in Britain, a "rush" across the ocean commenced, and the new colony of Victoria received a vast influx of gold-seekers mingled with persons who had not been lured by gold—but these formed a small minority. The population of Victoria increased from 97,000 in 1851 to 168,000 in 1852; it reached 220,000 in 1853, and 364,000 in 1855.

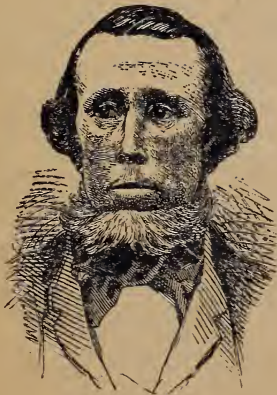
"The valley of Bendigo," writes Claude Mackay, "was changed as if by magic, and after the winter of 1852 almost all of natural beauty that Bendigo had possessed had disappeared and 'Ichabod' had been written on its sadly mutilated face. Persons approaching the diggings were made aware of their vicinity by an incessant discharge of fire-arms by the diggers and the continuous ringing of axes on the butts of trees. . . . It was a stirring scene, with the swarming mass of active, hardy and vigorous young men who had been driven to the colony by the fever into which the discovery of gold had thrown them. Among that splendid band of pioneers were men of all grades of life—



the artisan, the lawyer, the doctor, and even the nobleman, mingling together in the common throng, striving for the possession of the precious metal which was to secure for them wealth and fortune."

So rich were some of the holes sunk by diggers in Ironbark Gully, they were called "jewellers' shops." At Eaglehawk, in Sailors' Gully, and elsewhere, fortunes were being made by lucky diggers. "Gold was dug up almost in bucket-fuls." From one pocket in a hole sunk at the base of the first White Hill, two young miners took, in the course of the day, 50 lbs. weight of gold.

At the end of the year 1852, more than 100 tons of gold had been exported from Victoria; and the value of the total yield up to that date was estimated to be £12,000,000. By the end of 1853, the gold which had been exported from Victoria and New South Wales amounted to 1,625,255 ounces for the latter colony and 4,617,828 ounces for Victoria; the total money value being approximately £24,000,000.



*James Wm. Esmond.*

## **Lucky Diggers**

No story of the Ballarat diggings is more romantic than that of "The Blacksmith's Claim." From an area not much larger than that of a fair-sized room of a house, gold worth nearly £60,000 was taken in a few weeks. With a party of seven other novices, the blacksmith sank a shaft that it was dangerous to descend. After obtaining gold to the value of £12,800, the blacksmith syndicate sold the claim for £77 to a party of ten venturesome diggers, who in three days won from it gold worth £10,000. Then, renting the claim, they went on the spree. The tenants, opening up two drives from the hole, obtained over £14,000 worth of gold before the return of the owners, whom a week's work made £9000 richer. Next, a storekeeper purchased the claim for £100. He put in a gang to work on a share basis, and these men took out £5000 worth of gold in a fortnight, when the workings collapsed, the props having been undermined by an old "lag" from Van Diemen's Land, who formed one of the gang.

The rest of the party (writes Gaunt, in "Cas-sell's Picturesque Australasia") appear to have taken this misfortune very calmly, and to have completely abandoned the claim, for no mention is made of their further proceedings; but it is related how the author of the mischief coolly marked out a claim twenty-four feet square on top of the ruin, and working with a hired party, sunk a shaft straight as a die for the gutter. The first tubful of wash-dirt they raised turned out 40 lbs. weight of gold, and the next two averaged 10 lbs. each; and as Ballarat gold was, and is, superior to any other at all times, fetching at least £4 an ounce (written in 1887), those three bucketsful of earth were worth £2,880 to their fortunate possessor.

From a hole sunk at Eaglehawk Gully, Bendigo, five men took gold to the value of £65,000 in one day. They downed tools and unanimously decided to leave the diggings, being well content with £13,000 each—to keep them in comfort for life, or, more probably, be squandered.

“In the afternoon (September 15th, 1852), three returning diggers pitched their tents not far from ours. . . . On the same day that we had been idly resting on the borders of the Black Forest, they had succeeded in taking twenty-three pounds weight out of their claim, and two days after, two hundred and six ounces more, making, in all, gold to the value (in England) of about £1800. They were returning to Melbourne for a spree, and then as soon as the dry season was regularly set in, they meant to return to Bendigo for another spell at work.” (“A Lady’s Visit to the Gold Diggings,” by Mrs Charles Clacy.)

The golden treasure of Peg Leg Gully, Bendigo, was revealed through the surfacing of three men, each of whom had a wooden leg, and was therefore unable to sink a hole in the usual manner. Golden Gully’s riches were discovered by a miner who, while resting on the ground, idly pulled up tussocks of grass—to find beneath one a nest of nuggets.

“White Horse Gully (Bendigo) obtained its name from a white horse whose hoofs, whilst the animal was plunging here and there, flung up the surface ground and disclosed the treasures beneath. In this gully was found the famous ‘John Bull Nugget,’ lately exhibited in London. The party to whom it belonged consisted of three poor sailors; the one who actually discovered it had only been a fortnight on the diggings. The nugget weighed forty-five pounds, and was only a few inches below the surface.” (“A Lady’s Visit to the Gold Diggings.”)





*Lucky Diggers*



## **Canvastown on the Yarra**

A large city, named "Canvastown," sprang into existence on the south side of the Yarra; it commenced on the slope of the hill just past the approach to Prince's Bridge, and extended nearly to St. Kilda. It was laid off in streets and lanes, but the poor immigrants were not allowed to occupy even the small space necessary to stretch their limbs without paying for it, as the Government of the day charged five shillings per week for the accommodation; an unnecessary infliction, we admit, upon the really distressed, but which tended to operate beneficially in preventing speculators from erecting tents and leasing them out, and deriving a profit from the necessities of the immigrants . . .

Could all the secrets of "Canvastown" have been collected and published they would have formed quite as romantic and extraordinary a volume as the literature of the world ever produced. Persons of all ranks, of all countries, and of all creeds, were there huddled together in grotesque confusion. The main streets were crowded with boarding-houses and stores—all of canvas—and they were said to afford a harbor for some of the most vicious scoundrels with which the colony abounded.

The corporation—not behind in cupidity—leased out the two market reserves for similar purposes; and there were, therefore, two small "Canvastowns" in the centre of the city . . .

The necessities of those extraordinary times also brought into existence a mart for a peculiar kind of traffic. It was held daily on the line of Flinders Street, opposite the Customs House, and was designated the "Rag Fair." There immigrants who had not means to start for the diggings, or who had a superabundance of articles of wearing apparel, congregated to expose their property for

sale. They spread their wares, or held them in their hands, and offered them to the passers-by at prices so low as to entice them to become purchasers. The alarming sacrifices here made, day after day, and all day long, excited astonishment. Every article—from a needle to an anchor—could be purchased on this spot. Some went with a large amount of valuable property, which they were under the necessity of disposing of. Others had perhaps only one or two superfluities that they were positively compelled to turn into money to buy bread.

There were every variety of characters engaged in this singular traffic. The handsome and distinguished-looking scion of some good family anxious to dispose of the best portions of his valuable outfit, bought at Silver's, and which his fond mother or sister had taken so much pains about. The care-worn, broken-down gentleman or tradesman, or his wife, endeavoring to dispose of a silver teapot or a gold snuff-box, or some other carefully hoarded-up family relic, which only actual want would have compelled any of them to part with. The stalwart farmer's son from Cumberland, or some other inward county, offering a gun, or a watch, which he found useless in a country like Australia in the golden era. Some with a book, or umbrella, or a pair of boots. In a word, there were every class of seller, with every kind of article to dispose of.

The traffic in "Rag Fair" became at last so considerable as to interfere with the interests of the legitimate storekeepers, and a memorial on the subject having been forwarded to the city council, that body thought it necessary to suppress it; and an order went forth to take into custody all persons guilty of offering goods for sale on the forbidden ground where "Rag Fair" was held.

The hotels presented a singular, and to a mind of any refinement, a disgusting scene. The bars, parlors, and public rooms were crowded with people in all the various stages of drunkenness—some were drowsy, some foolish, some violent, some excited, some idiotic, some positively mad. Such assemblages of the worshippers at the shrine of Bacchus, could hardly have been jumbled together in any other part of the world; and the freaks of some lucky diggers were so erratic that the stranger to such scenes would hardly believe that they occurred. The great and unaccountable propensity of such as had been very successful in obtaining treasure to fly to dissipation, and to squander their wealth in extravagant profusion, astonished men of reflection; cases have been known where these men have taken up rolls of bank-notes in their drunken fury and eaten or destroyed them.

*"History of Victoria"—Thomas McCombie (1858)*



*Working a "Whip"*

## **The Turon Diggings**

I mounted the mail-cart and quitted Bathurst for the Turon. We got on smoothly for a little while, and then began sundry tossings up and down, which reminded one more of a vessel at sea than anything else. Many dreadful accidents have happened from bad roads, untrained horses; and drunken drivers. We came, at last, to a hill so high that all dismounted and walked much longer than the heat of the day rendered agreeable; here was a magnificent view of the Golden Regions; and further on commenced the descent of a steep hill to the gorge of the Turon.

The roads, instead of being gravelled, are formed merely by the removal of the trees, and are, therefore, natural roads; and the descent of some parts is so steep and dangerous near to the Turon, that to prevent the drays and carts being hurled to destruction, they attach large and ponderous trees to the back part to steady them; and hundreds of these trees are left, almost stopping up the way, when they have descended sufficiently far to proceed securely without this curious species of land-helm. After this, the Turon, with its thousands of white tents became visible, resembling a large army encamped. There were no houses to be seen; occasionally a weather-boarded building, covered at the top with canvas.

Such was a specimen of Sofala, the very centre of the Turon diggings, when I dismounted very gladly from the mail-coach, where, in making the descent to the Turon, by the side of a steep hill, the coachman persuaded me to retain my seat, instead of dismounting with the other passengers; which I consented to do. This was to balance the fellow; for he informed me, when I remarked how dangerous it was, and when it was next to impossible to stop, that he was the only coachman who had not been precipitated, coach and horses,



down the hill; very consolatory, thought I, to be made use of thus as mere ballast. . . .

The noise produced by cradling is very peculiar, and quite loud enough when many thousands are going together. Thousands of them are to be seen and heard by the side of the River Turon, as the people preferred the wet to the dry diggings. The following statement will show how individual effort may succeed:—

A man obtained £350 worth of gold in a few hours. Another £440 worth in one day. A poor man collected 9 lb. of gold in one day. A man named Brenan laid hold of a lump which, when sold, fetched £1155. A blackfellow dug up a huge mass of quartz which yielded 106 lb. of gold, worth £4340. Many men made their £25 a week. I worked with a party, for a few hours, whose earnings were a pound a day. Mr Hardy, a gold commissioner, has stated, in one of his reports, that any man might earn his ten shillings a day.

I was much struck with the good order preserved in a wild mountain-gorge, where the only preventive to evil-doers was a mere handful of police, all of whom might have been annihilated in five minutes by 500 diggers armed with their mining tools. When I visited the Turon, the population amounted to 10,000 or 12,000; but probably no more than half that number were digging; and taking them altogether, they were not half so noisy as the rabble at an English race, and on the whole much better behaved.

*"A Tramp to the Diggings"—John Shaw (1852)*

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From 1600 A.D. to 1700 A.D. Europe's entire supply of gold was obtained from America, whose mines are estimated during that century to have produced £337,500,000 worth of the precious metal. Of this £33,000,000 went to the Philippine Islands, India, and China. It has been estimated that £60,000,000 worth of gold was used in church decoration and for other ornamental purposes.

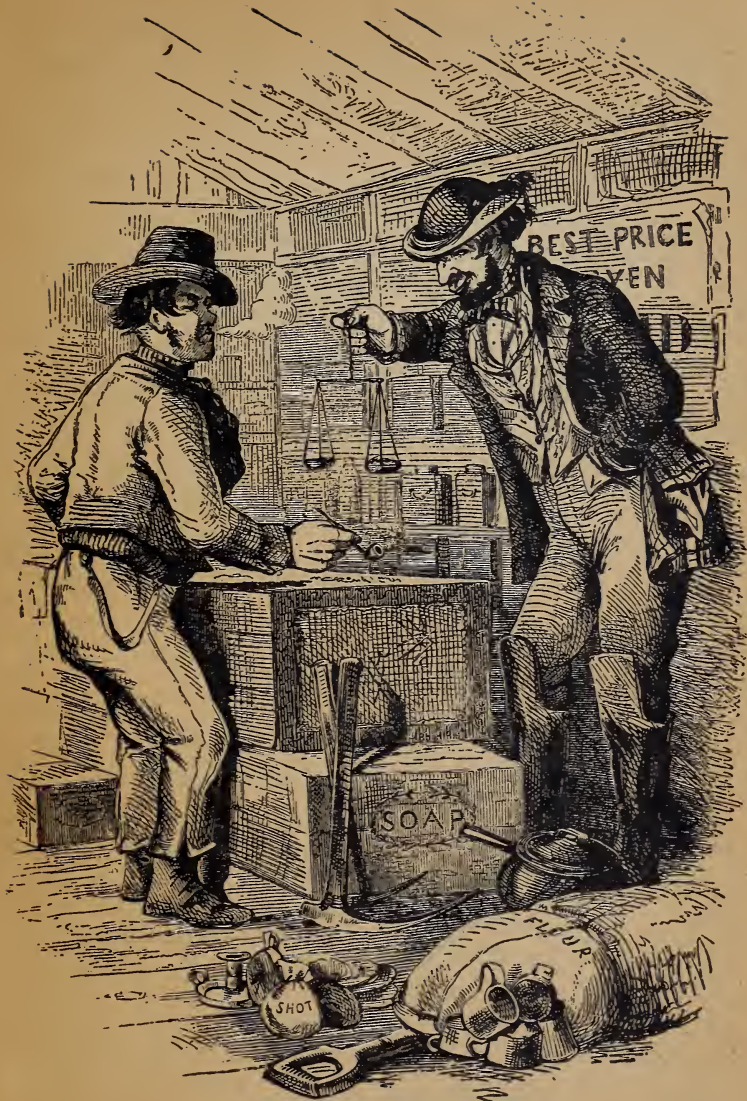
## **Melbourne's Gold-brokers**

Any account of the people of Melbourne would be incomplete without some notice of a class which has been called into existence by the gold discoveries—I mean the gold-brokers. In the earlier days of gold-finding their calling was a very lucrative one; so lucrative, that a host of competitors sprang up, and profits soon became in consequence much reduced.

The gold-broker carries on his trade in a small shop in one of the chief streets. On entering, you see on the counter three or four pairs of gold scales of different sizes; also a large metallic tray, on which he spreads the gold while blowing off the foreign matter and extracting minute particles of iron with the magnet. There is also a hammer and a small iron block, on which pieces of quartz containing gold are pulverised in order to liberate the metal. A loaded revolver is within reach behind him.

The digger, having obtained his little leather bag of gold, duly sealed and labelled, from the Government Escort Office, takes it to the broker—first asks the price of gold for the day, produces his bag, and then watches the operation of cleaning, and blowing, and weighing. He finally receives a cheque for the amount.

Many of these brokers are Jews, and their shops are distinguished by large bowls of gold-dust and tempting nuggets exposed in the windows. Some of these of inferior note have no very high reputation. The facilities for fraudulent practices are great, with little chance of detection—especially when dealing with obtuse and illiterate men. The weights may be too heavy, or one arm of the beam a trifle longer than the other; or, if both weights and balance are correct, fraud may yet be effected by resorting to some sleight-of-hand trickery. That such practices are not in-



Gold-brokers



frequent is generally believed! and at least one delinquent has been convicted, and is now expiating his crimes by imprisonment with hard labor.

In other traffic it is the business of the seller to attract to him the buyer; but with gold the case is reversed, and the buyer has to allure to him the seller. Thus in the early days of the gold discoveries it became common to see such notices as these stuck up in shops in Melbourne: "5000 ounces of gold wanted"; "10,000 ounces wanted immediately—highest price given." When there was a difference of 25 per cent. between the London and Melbourne prices, speculators were anxious to obtain and ship to London as much as their funds would allow; but now the banks have entered the market as purchasers, and their competition has so raised the price that the purchaser of gold at Melbourne, for exportation, will often be a loser by his venture.

*"The Golden Colony"*—G. H. Wathen (1855).

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## **Boy Farmer's £850 Find**

Stuart Hurnall, 19 years of age, when ploughing a paddock on his father's property, at Armstrong, Victoria, in April, 1936, uncovered a nugget weighing 100 ozs., and worth about £850. At the first short turn, the plough unearthed the golden stone, lying only a foot below the surface, but it was not until the fifth turn that the young farmer's attention was attracted by the dull yellow of gold against red clay. A nugget weighing 82 ozs. had been found in the same paddock forty-eight years before the second big chunk of gold was revealed by the plough.



## **The Great Escort Robbery**

The following particulars of the above robbery have been obtained from various press reports, published shortly after the robbery took place, and are fully authenticated by later reports published after the trial.

The first report of the robbery stated that the robbers numbered about twenty—subsequently reduced to twelve—eventually narrowed down to six. Their names were Gray, Atkins, Melville, Wilson and the two brothers Francis. The robbery was daringly planned, skilfully and successfully carried out. It appears that several large trees were felled right across the road at a spot where it took a very sharp bend, so much so that the obstruction was not visible until the traveller was close upon it. The escort, consisting of about eight to ten troopers, including and commanded by Superintendent Warner, upon turning the bend in the road, and seeing the obstruction, halted, intending to move round it. The bush-rangers, who were hiding behind trees, fired a volley, then jumped from their hiding place and fired a second and third volley, wounding four troopers. The remainder held their ground for a time, but eventually had to run for it, the booty, amounting to nearly £10,000 in gold and notes, being secured by the robbers, who succeeded in getting clear away.

Profound sensation was created throughout Australia by the event, as well as a stern determination to secure the criminals. The police, assisted by hundreds of miners and others, scoured the country for miles around, but without success. Later on, certain events happened which created suspicion, and, being fairly traced, led to the arrest of George Francis, in the vicinity of the "Digger's Rest," about 18 miles from Melbourne. George Francis, seeing the game was up, turned informer,

and gave such valuable information to the police that enabled them to act promptly. Immediately after, George Francis committed suicide. Further information enabled the police to secure John Francis, who, being ignorant of his brother's arrest and death, also volunteered to become "Queen's evidence." Being accepted, he gave information that enabled the police to arrest Melville, Wilson and Atkins, two of whom were on board ships about to sail; their arrest being effected not a moment too soon, as they would have escaped but for the timely information given by John Francis.

Melville, Wilson and Atkins were shortly after tried before Mr Justice Williams (father of His Honor, Judge Hartley Williams), the principal evidence being that of John Francis and a digger, who was able to swear to a certain nugget found upon one of the prisoners. They were found guilty, sentenced to death and executed. One of the number, named Gray, said to have been the prime mover in organising and carrying out the robbery, succeeded in escaping, and has never since been caught, whilst John Francis, probably the greatest scoundrel of the lot, escaped punishment. I should like to probe that man's full career, were it possible.

*"Reminiscences of the Goldfields"—"The Pioneer Prospector"*

## ***The Royal Mint, Melbourne***

A branch of the Royal Mint was established in Melbourne by Imperial Order in Council in 1869. It was opened for coinage in 1872, and has now become the principal mint in Australia, the sole remaining branch in Perth being devoted to gold only. Melbourne now mints all the Commonwealth coinage. Of the total issue of silver and bronze coinage, amounting to some £8,000,000, over £6,000,000 have been coined in Australia, mainly in the Melbourne branch. Gold received and coined in 60 years totals 42,000,000 ounces, of a value of £164,000,000—calculated at the old rate of a little over £4 per standard ounce.

*"Victoria, The First Century"*

## **Chinese on the Diggings**

Hundreds of diggers were scattered over vast tracts of country in New South Wales and the adjoining colonies, digging and prospecting with but scanty returns for their labor. As soon as the Lambing Flat field was fairly opened up, thousands of diggers hastened thither in search of a golden harvest. The very nature of the goldfield held out great inducements to the miner, as in the early history of the field the deepest sinking was from 60 to 80 feet; and in many instances it was simply surface digging. It may, I presume, be considered as essentially a poor man's field; every man that could and would work was enabled to make fair wages; while in very many instances the yield was above mere wages.

In 1861 the population was very large, numbering, according to the census, over 15,000 souls. It is painful to record that a great number of this vast crowd was composed of the worst class of men, and had it not been that there was in nearly every locality a wholesome leaven of true, noble-hearted men, ready at all times to stand loyal to the best interests of the State, it is impossible to imagine to what extent the lawlessness would have reached. As it was, even with all the good and true men, it frequently happened that the mob defied all attempts to keep law and order. The records of the police court will unhappily reveal the truth of these assertions.

All eyes were centred upon Lambing Flat; every man who could use a pick and shovel was anxious to try his luck, and at last John Chinaman put in his appearance. I am no apologist for the Chinese; I do not advocate their claims as equal to those of our own countrymen; but still they have certain rights which ought not to be trampled upon. As soon as John got a footing he communicated with his countrymen, and they





*Rocking the Cradle*



came up from all quarters and commenced their digging operations. Europeans, as a rule, are not fond of small earnings on a goldfield. John is perfectly satisfied with fair wages. The Europeans take up certain localities, work for a short while, are dissatisfied, rush off to a new place, and the abandoned ground is forthwith occupied by the Chinese. Perhaps within a few weeks the same Europeans are again disappointed and return to their old quarters, to find they have really abandoned a good claim, which is being assiduously worked by John Chinaman . . .

Sunday being a leisure day with the miners, it was not an uncommon thing to hear the band playing a lively air, such as, "Cheer, boys, cheer," &c., and see a mob of 2000 or 3000 men proceeding under their leaders, with banners and flags often ornamented with the pigtails of some unfortunate Chinamen, to the nearest Chinese encampment. It will suffice for the present to give as nearly as possible a sketch of one such Sunday scene. On this occasion the procession arrived in Burrowa-street from Tipperary Gully, collecting stragglers on the way, till the mob numbered about 2000 men, they turned the corner into Main-street, and proceeded down that street, over the Main Creek, when they ascended a gentle rise towards Victoria Hill. On this hill were located about 300 Chinese; a neater little canvas town could not well be found. The Chinese here were making fair wages; they were industriously plying their callings and interfering with no one. On marched the mob, and as they neared the encampment made a run for it, and, with yells and hoots, hunted and whipped the Chinamen off, knocking them down with the butt end of their whips, galloping after them, and using the most cruel torture upon the poor defenceless creatures; in many cases pulling their tails out by the roots and planting their fresh trophies on their banners. Not satisfied with this, their next step

was to rifle the tents of all the gold and then deliberately fire every tent in the encampment.

In less than two hours, all that remained of the camp—the homes of some 300 Chinese—was a heap of smouldering ruins. The Chinamen were severely handled; one poor fellow was knocked down by a horseman with a loaded whip, and his forehead cut in a most frightful manner. It is questionable whether he recovered. The procession then reformed, the band struck up “Rule Britannia,” and proceeded to the encampment at Back Creek.

*“Banking Under Difficulties”—By a Bank Official (1888)*



*Arrival of Gold Escort at Queen Street, Melbourne.*

## The Hundredweight of Gold

A young Irish doctor who came out to New South Wales in the thirties of last century settled at Bathurst, but his profession, combined with farming, failed to make him prosperous. So Dr. William John Kerr tried his luck at sheep farming. A small station between the Macquarie River and the Meroo Creek contented Dr. Kerr, who earned his neighbors' goodwill by practising his profession for love—he accepted no fees. Sometimes he would ride nearly 50 miles to attend a sick child. None of the settlers envied good Dr. Kerr when Fortune gave him a big slice from her golden cake.

This is how it happened—a true story of the old diggings era in Australia.

On a June day in 1851 a blackfellow named Jemmy, employed by the doctor as a shepherd, when following the sheep over a low ridge, noticed three quartz stones and, prompted merely by curiosity, tried to overturn the largest one with a stick. Its weight astonished him, and stooping to examine the stone he found lying beside it a flake of shining yellow metal. Now Jemmy knew that the whitefellow valued round yellow discs called sovereigns much more than they valued "tschillings." Had he found the stuff of which they were made? Might be. He would tell the boss about it. Each of those heavy stones had "plenty yellow," but the big fellow was plastered with it on its lower surface.

Let the "*Bathurst Free Press*" give its version of the discovery—doubtless written by "Our Special Reporter":

Bathurst is mad again! The delirium of gold fever has returned with increased activity. Men meet together, stare stupidly at each other, talk incoherent nonsense, and wonder what will happen next. Everybody has a hundred times seen a hundredweight of flour, a hundredweight of

sugar or potatoes is an everyday fact, but a hundredweight of gold is a phrase scarcely known in the English language. . . . Yesterday afternoon, a pair of greys in tandem, driven by W. H. Suttor, Esq., M.C., made their appearance at the bottom of William-street. In a few seconds they were pulled up opposite the *Free Press* office, and the first indication of the astounding fact which met the view was two massive pieces of the precious metal, glittering in virgin purity, as they leaped from the rock. The townspeople were on the *qui vive*, and about 150 were collected around the gig to catch a glimpse of the wonder. The two pieces spoken of were freely handed about amongst the assembled throng for some 20 minutes, and the vehicle was pointed out as containing a square box, the repository of the remainder of the hundredweight of gold. It was then conveyed to the Union Bank of Australia. . . .

The first two pieces already alluded to weighed severally 6lb. 4oz. 1dwt., and 6lb. 13dwt., besides which were 16 drafts of 5lb. 4oz. each, making in all 102lb. 9oz. 5dwt. From Dr. Kerr we learned that he had retained upwards of 3lb. as specimens, so that the total weight found would be 106lb.—all disembowelled from the earth at one time. . . . The heavier of the two large pieces presented an appearance not unlike a honeycomb or sponge, and consisted of particles of a crystalline form, as did nearly the whole of the gold. The second larger piece was smoother, and the particles more condensed, and seemed as if it had been acted upon by water. The remainder was broken into lumps of 2lb. to 3lb. and downwards, and was remarkably free from quartz or earthy matter . . .

In return for his very valuable services, Dr. Kerr has presented the blackfellow and his brother with two flocks of sheep, two saddle horses, and a quantity of rations, and supplied them with a team of bullocks to plough some of their own land.



## ***The Diggings : A New Chum's Impressions***

Forest Creek must be surveyed as a picture which no other age, since the world began, has exhibited. The tents, in certain spots, are crowded together with all the compactness of a city street, and tenanted by the creatures of every country, actuated by the passions of every clime. The Government Commissioner's establishment or residence is apparent by the mounted police on one side and the native police on the other; and a number of stores for the sale of the necessaries of a gold-digger's life are here and there scattered like so many detached shops in the middle of the town. You must not expect, however, that their frontages are windowed like those in Regent Street or St. Paul's Churchyard, or defended from the attack of the midnight burglar by ponderous doors and locks and bars. No, no; nothing of this kind; the light penetrates the receptacles as it best can, whilst their property is guarded by the vigilance of its owners, who are usually supplied with a few formidable weapons, ready charged, for any danger that may invade them.

The whole scene is one of busy, laborious life. The forest, whose echoes but a few months ago were awakened only by the rushing of a stream, the voice of the bell-bird, or the cry of the jay, or laughing jackass, now reverberates the sounds of human industry, wheeling, washing, rocking, and digging in all directions. A few women and one or two children stand at the entrance of some tents, and others are even assisting their husbands or relatives in the voluntary toil to which they have doomed themselves for a time. Some have labored unceasingly from day to day for a month, the term of their licence, and have made nothing; others have hardly broken ground and have taken



*Inspecting a Licence*

hundreds of pounds. Disappointment depresses one group to an utter abandonment of the field; hope animates another to continued exertion. Despondency for the last day plies his axe in one hole, and drops it in despair. Manly perseverance in the next falls upon a pocket of the auriferous treasure, and is independent for life . . .

Such are the impressions which were made upon me, and subsequently confirmed, when I first surveyed, from the top of an eminence, one of those auriferous valleys which have now become so common in the Austral world. The sun was nearly setting, and the wearied miners, mostly dressed in red and blue woollen shirts and broad cabbage-tree hats, were beginning to pick up their tools to retire for the day, leaving the ground so completely holed that it resembled the empty pits in a large tanner's yard more than any other object I have seen. The partitions dividing the holes are, in most instances, very narrow, yet the diggers move upon them with a nimbleness and alacrity which daily custom only can account for. They wheel the barrow or carry the bag with the utmost ease and precision upon ledges scarcely more than a foot wide, and with no other danger save the breaking down of the partition, when the unfortunate victim is precipitated, perhaps, twenty feet to the bottom of the hole, and breaks the back of his comrade, or shares with him the death of being buried alive. Accidents of a frightful nature are by no means infrequent, and often attended with circumstances that will incapacitate the sufferers for ever from undergoing any kind of labor requiring the slightest extra exertion. These generally arise from carelessness, ignorance, or the too deep indulgence in the rum-jug, which, by the way, has proved as great a curse at the diggings as the most sincere Timon or hater of his species could desire, and seems to carry with it, wherever it goes, trains of evils as incalculable



in their amount as they are enormous in their magnitude.

Whilst we were all resting ourselves beneath the shade of a gum-tree, and musing on the extraordinary scene before us, a gun from the tent of the Commissioners was fired, and announced the termination of digging for the day. Now every party sought its tent, and another scene in the drama began to develop itself, yet more picturesque than that which we have attempted to describe. The same amount of business seemed to be going on, but it was entirely of another kind. Fires were being kindled, and large volumes of smoke began to roll upward through the clear atmosphere of the valley. The noise of the axe, the rocking of the cradle, with the swish-swash sound of the water, the wheeling of the barrows, had all ceased, and a comparative stillness pervaded the whole extent of that spot so prolific of human life. Kettles were occupying the fires, and were soon steaming in all directions, when the fragrant tea, accompanied with the solid damper (Anglice unleavened bread), refreshed the weary and stimulated the weak. To this succeeded the pipe in the cool of the evening, beneath the shadow of the tent, and the talk of the day's findings and adventures till night arrived. Then the fires were made up, and the appearance of long lines of blazing logs, with some of the dark figures of Salvator Rosa's imagination hovering round, and, here and there, dimly shadowed out against the stem of a tree, had a wild and striking effect.

In short, the whole proceedings were so different from anything we had ever seen, and possessed so much novelty, that it was not for some time after the gun had fired that we commenced the erection of our own frail tenement upon the very spot from which we had surveyed the operations in the creek below.

*"The Gold-finder of Australia"—John Sherer.*



## ***Famous Nuggets***

Some lucky diggers have made a fortune at a stroke, unearthing a mass of gold. Many nuggets found in Australia have contained from £500 to £1000 worth of gold. These are not even listed as famous nuggets, of which there were almost a score.

The most valuable of all Australian nuggets, "Holtermann's," was found at Hill End, New South Wales, in 1872. It weighed 7560oz. gross, and was valued at £12,000.

Next comes the "Welcome Stranger," found at Moliagul, Victoria, in 1869. Its weight was 2284oz. and its value £9534. A stroke of the pick revealed it, for this world-famous nugget was lying only about one inch below the surface of the ground. Until the discovery of the "Holtermann" the "Welcome Stranger" was the biggest nugget of gold the world had ever seen. Two hundredweights of gold! And for 15 years diggers had frequented the district; many of them doubtless having often passed within a few yards of the spot where an inch of soil concealed a fortune which could have been dug out with a bowie knife!

Two experienced miners, John Deason and Richard Oates, left Cornwall for Victoria in 1854. The former was a married man with a family, but Oates was a carefree bachelor. Meeting on the ship they became friends and decided to be mates and work together at the diggings. On the Sandhurst goldfield they had no luck though other miners were making fortunes. So they decided to try elsewhere. Deason proposed Moliagul, where he would select land and combine farming with alluvial gold mining. Oates agreed, and to Moliagul they went, choosing for their mining operations the side of a small hill, to the west of the mountain. They erected a puddling machine, and for several years made fairly good money. Then

fortune gave her wheel a little turn. A nugget worth £100 was found, to be followed by one worth more than £400. Fortune now reversed her wheel and four lean years left the two mates with very little cash. Even the farm was not paying.

Tucker was scarce, and when Deason asked the storekeeper, to whom they owed money, for a bag of flour on credit, he was refused. The date was February 5th, 1869. Deason's family went hungry and he and his mate felt desperate when they went to work on their claim that morning. For a while they worked without getting "a color." Then Deason struck at a clear space between the roots of an old tree; and the pick rebounded. He cursed his luck, believing that the pick was broken. A few moments later he was dancing for joy, and shouting to Oates to "come and see." That one stroke of the pick had won the mates a fortune. The mass of gold revealed measured a foot in length and nearly as much in width.

"The weight was so great," writes George Sutherland (in his book, "Tales of the Goldfields") "that it was difficult for the two men to move it. However, by dint of great exertion, they succeeded in carrying it down the hill to Deason's cottage, where they commenced to inspect their wonderful treasure. It was so completely covered in black earth, and so tarnished in color that an inexperienced person might have supposed it to be merely a mass of auriferous earth or stone. But its weight at once dispelled all doubt on that point, for it was more than twice as heavy as a piece of iron of the same size. Great was the rejoicing among Deason's family. The wife piled up a huge fire, and Deason placed the nugget on the top, while the rest of the family stood around watching the operation of reducing the mass to the semblance of gold."

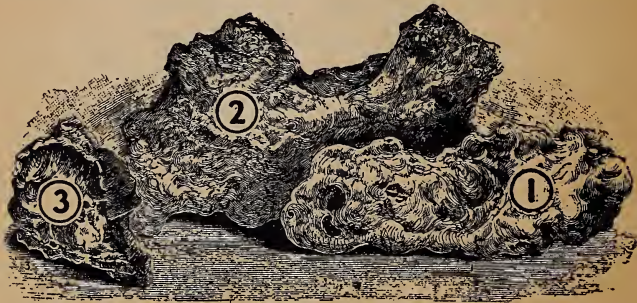
On the following morning the two lucky diggers took the huge nugget to Dunolly, in a dray, which was followed by a number of their neighbors, who had heard of the find. Arrived at the township, Deason and Oates deposited their treasure on the floor of the bank manager's room. It was weighed and found to contain nearly two hundredweights of pure gold, thus putting in the shade the "Welcome" nugget, found at Ballarat. It has recently been stated that the total weight of gold in the "Stranger" was 2305oz.

The "Welcome Stranger" was sold to the bank, after its finders had chopped off some small pieces (total weight about 10oz.) as souvenirs for their special friends. Deason and his mate, after dividing nearly £10,000, decided to give up nugget hunting. They parted, only to meet in Dunolly a few years later. Deason's ventures had failed, and he was again a poor man. Oates, however, was prosperous, having invested his money in mining shares which turned out trumps, the various companies paying good dividends.

### **"The Welcome"**

Ranking third among world-famous nuggets, the "Welcome" was found at Ballarat in 1858. Its weight was just over 184lb., or 2217oz. This great mass of gold was unearthed at Bakery Hill, which already had yielded (in 1855) two big nuggets, weighing 40lb. and 47lb. respectively. While the "Welcome Stranger" was just beneath the surface, almost asking to be found, the "Welcome Nugget" was discovered at a depth of 180 feet. Its owners, twenty-four men, sold it for £10,500. The purchasers lost money on the deal, for when the nugget was resold in Melbourne it realised only £9325, at £4/4/11 an ounce. About 10lb. of the mass consisted of quartz and clay.

A party of four diggers found the "Blanche Barkly" nugget, at Kingower, Victoria, in 1857. It was isolated at a depth of 13 feet, within about two yards of holes that had been sunk three years before. A lucky quartette dug up, in one mass, gold to the value of £6915. Not a bad morning's work. Twenty-eight inches in length and 10 inches across at its widest part, the "Blanche Barkly" weighed a shade over 145lb., or 1743oz., only 2lb. consisting of quartz. Its glittering beauty



*Notable Victorian Nuggets.*

- 1. Welcome Nugget.*
- 2. Welcome Stranger.*
- 3. The Precious.*

made this grand nugget a magnificent show piece. Instead of selling it to the bank immediately, its owners, realising the possibilities in exhibition of their find, took it to London, and at one time drew £50 a week by showing it at the Crystal Palace.

Canadian Gully, Ballarat, has produced several great nuggets, notably the "Lady Hotham," whose weight was 134lb. 11oz., or 1177oz., the value of the gold content being £5532, calculated at the rate of £3/17/9 per ounce. The "Lady Hotham," discovered several years before the "Blanche Barkly," unlike the latter, was dark-colored and unattractive in general appearance. It would have been disappointing to the thousands of



wonder seekers who, in the Crystal Palace, gazed spellbound at the glittering nugget from Kingower, in the golden colony of Victoria.

Two other Canadian Gully nuggets, discovered early in the fifties, weighed 1117oz. and 1011oz. respectively. The "Sarah Sands," also from that El Dorado, turned the scales at 1619oz. and put £5532 into the pockets of its discoverers.

"Kerr's Hundredweight," the story of which is told in another page, realised £5000. A nugget in two pieces, total weight 2952oz., found at Dunolly, Victoria, in 1857, was worth £5500 to the finders. At Burrandong, New South Wales, in 1858, a nugget weighing 1286oz. and worth £4389 was unearthed. The "Heron Nugget," found at Mount Alexander, Victoria, in 1855, weighed 1008 oz. and was valued at £4080.

Berlin goldfield, Victoria, in 1870-71, richly rewarded a few diggers. Two of the seven or eight big nuggets found were named, respectively, "Viscount Canterbury" (weight 1121oz., value £4000), and the "Viscountess Canterbury" (884 oz.). The "Precious" weighed 1621oz., the "Kum Tow" 718oz., and the "Needful" 247oz. These last three were lying about 12 feet below the surface; while another Berlin nugget, weighing 478oz., was 9 feet underground. At the McIntyre diggings a nugget weighing 452oz. was discovered only a few inches from the surface.

### Mount Moliagul

Mount Moliagul, where the "Welcome Stranger" was found, was mainly a "nugget-hunting" locality, and orthodox gold digging was never carried on there. The soil was examined with pick and pocketknife, and few men failed to earn a living by getting small pieces of gold every now and then; while some were lucky enough to make fairly rich finds occasionally — nuggets

worth anything from £100 to £1000. But the place was almost deserted when Deason and Oates made their wonderful discovery. Moliagul is close to Jones's Creek, where Dunolly township was built. Gold was discovered at Moliagul, not by prospectors, or any man, but by the wheels of a dray passing near the Mount; cutting into boggy ground, they revealed deposits of gold below. Within a week more than 3000 persons had gathered on the new fields.

More than one thousand nuggets, ranging in weight from about 30 ozs. to over 2000 ozs. have been found on Victoria's alluvial diggings. At least one dozen have weighed over 1000 ozs. each. Poseidon, near Tarnagulla, has yielded many nuggets in recent times, including three that each weighed more than 500 ozs.

The "Platypus" nugget, found in a deserted claim at Crusoe Gully, Bendigo, weighed about 400 ozs. The "Christmas Box," which weighed 306 ozs. net, was unearthed by two lucky miners at Poseidon, near Tarnagulla, a week before Christmas Day, 1906.

Fortune may appear in the guise of misfortune. At Rheola, one day in 1870, after the claim had been flooded and the method of working changed, a nugget weighing 912 ozs. was discovered. This was the famous "Viscount Canterbury."

At Larkville, Western Australia, in January, 1931, the "Golden Eagle" was unearthed. This splendid nugget weighed 1135 ozs.

Among the treasures sent from Western Australia to the Paris Exhibition was the "Bobby Dazzler" nugget, weighing 413 ozs. solid gold, and valued at £1500. Another specimen was the nugget found by two diggers, who cut it into halves and drew lots, only to find that there was merely a difference of thirty shillings in the value of the two sections.

## **Old Fossickers' Yarns**

Not so long ago, on a mountain road leading from Wood's Point, on a wet and miserably cold night, I picked up a man heavily laden with tent, blankets, and provisions. A few miles later, in the bleak wilderness of mountain tops, burnt bare in a bush fire, I put him down. He was to sleep under a log and make his way miles up a valley to re-establish his burnt-out camp the next day. Stranger things may happen than that I should see him again, but every day makes the possibility of seeing him, or any like him, more remote. He was not a "swaggie," but a fossicker for gold, and his kind appear rapidly to be following the dodo into extinction.

Victorian records show that there are fewer prospectors now than for a great many years, that gold is very hard to get, and that very few of the several hundreds who went fossicking in the depression succumbed permanently to the vague attractions of the search for it. Experts sum the position of these unfortunates up in the statement: They are given a tent, a pick, a shovel, a couple of blankets, and a soldier's farewell. Five per cent. found some gold. Some lived on 8/- a week sustenance and local charity. And some made quite a bit out of rabbits and parrots.

To the old hands, dealing in their grains or pennyweights of gold, depression meant little, and the desperate men who took to the hills just came and disappeared again. They were not nearly so important as the booming price of gold, or as the recent drought, which has held boom prices from their grasp. But the permanent men of the hills carry on—and, like old soldiers, gently fade away, leaving untold a thousand tales, many as thrilling as have ever been told.

What story lay behind "Gentleman Lock," of the mountains behind Wood's Point, who ignored

a fortune of £90,000 waiting for him in Melbourne, lived in an eight by six shack, fossicked, cultivated a tidy garden—and died as a bush fire wiped out his home? Field officials of the Mines Department knew him. They also knew that, in his day, he had known how to spend money neither wisely nor well.

What tale was told in a hut on Mount Matlock one dark cold night when man met tinker, both taking shelter, and the man realised that the tinker had worked for him in Tasmania when the man earned £1200 a year before he came down to humping a pack and looking for a likely creek?

What tragic reason, or escape from duty, lay behind the Englishman of a trio in the hills comprising a German, a Spaniard, and himself? At least he was regarded as English until he was heard conversing fluently with a Chinaman in his tongue, and an Italian in his, and it turned out that he was a German and spoke most European main languages and several others, learnt in the happier days of a prosperous manhood.

What story of travel, joy and hardship could have been told by the two brothers, men in their eighties, who fossicked together on the Thomson River until one went blind and both had, eventually, to go on the hated pension and live in a township in the hills until they went to happier valleys?

What discovery had been made by the man who wrote to a friend to come and get him from the Lerderderg River, where, after the known fields had been abandoned for 50 years, he had discovered something "so important that only the Mines Department could be trusted with the secret"? The friend never went for him and the Department does not recognise the man's name.

How fared the man who, on a track worn by ten thousand feet in this same area, at the beginning



of the depression found a nugget worth a large sum and caused a rush? No other gold was found. How easy lies the bones of the man who, in the Long Tunnel, Walhalla, was estimated to have pushed a truck equal to the distance round the world? He retired to Stewart's Creek and was credited, being then in his early 80's, with having run 12 miles through the mountains for assistance when a mine caved in.

*Earl Robieson, in Melbourne "Herald"*

## **Early Australian Currency**

The records of early Australian currency are extremely scanty. In 1813, Governor Macquarie, of New South Wales, resorted to the expedient of cutting out a central disc from a number of Spanish dollars, with the object of retaining them in the colony in their pierced form to serve the purposes of currency. The small circular piece, known as the "dump," was marked with the name of the colony, the date (1813), and its current value, "Fifteenpence." The larger piece, known as the "hole-dollar," was similarly marked on its inner rim, and also with its circulating value, "Five shillings"—that of the Spanish dollar. An order, dated December 31, 1822, reduced their current value to "three-fourths of the Spanish dollar." The discovery of gold in 1851 led to a rapid increase of population, and to heavy demands being made upon the current coin of the colonies for the purchase of the newly-found bullion. These demands could not be met by the ordinary currency, and a petition was addressed to Her Majesty the Queen on December 19, 1851, by the Legislative Council of New South Wales, for the establishment of a branch of the Royal Mint at Sydney, in order that colonists might be able to convert their gold dust and nuggets into money.

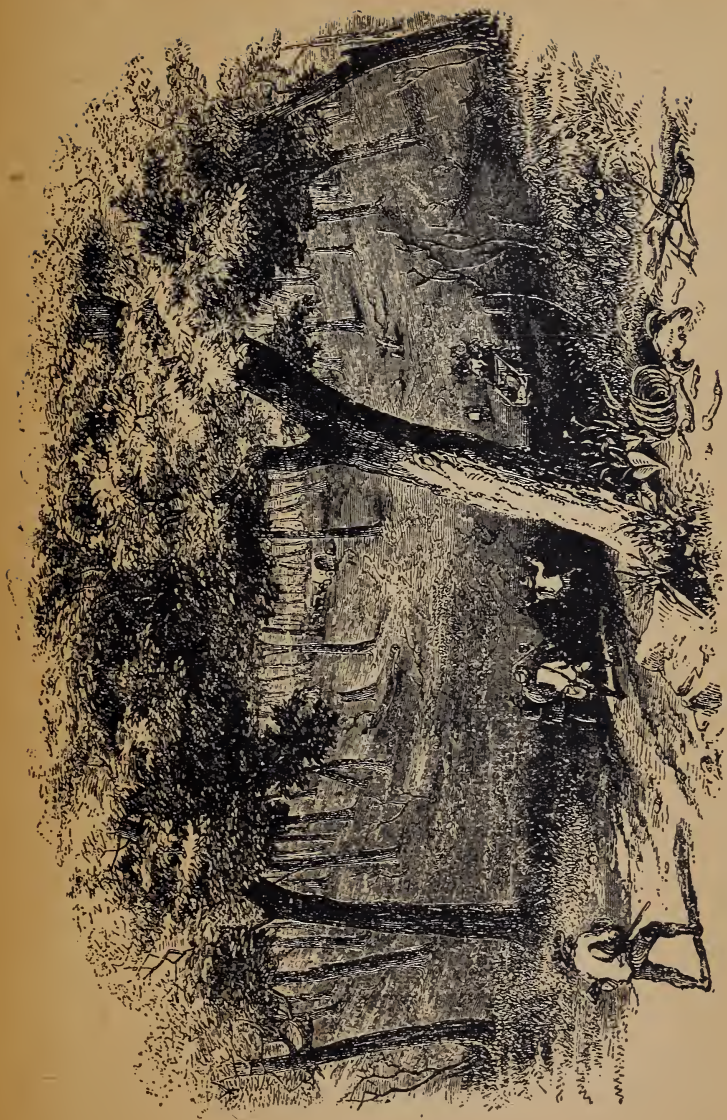
*"Coinage and Currency of South Australia"—Thomas Gill.*

## **Diggers Write Home**

The letters here quoted were written by men on the diggings in Victoria, to their folks at home in England, Scotland, or Ireland. They were first published in the fascinating book, "The Goldfinder of Australia," by John Sherer, who mingles fact with fiction in his narrative. The letters may, or may not, be wholly genuine; but at least they are founded on fact, and faithfully describe scenes and incidents of the Golden Era.

"Forest Creek, Tuesday, 26th October.—On arriving in Melbourne I engaged two horse-teams, of two horses each, for the moderate charge of £60 per ton; and, having laid in a few supplies necessary for the journey, was ready to start this morning. By two p.m. we were on the road to the Diggings. Shortly after starting, I picked up a young man recently from Glasgow, and who was in the same employment with me there. He was bound to try his luck amongst the nuggets. He very gladly accepted my offer of our company and protection; while I was equally glad to meet with an old acquaintance with whom I could speak. The road for the first six miles from Melbourne was thickly studded with pedestrians going or returning to the mines, besides scores of horse and bullock drays, horsemen, etc. The walking here was good, the country being level. By sundown we had gone twelve miles, and found ourselves all alone on the borders of a deep gully. The roads here branch off by fifty or more different tracks, every man taking what he believes to be the best, or shortest, path. On the border of the gully we found a good camping-place, with good water and food for the horses . . . boiled the kettle, and had tea.

"Wednesday.—By daylight we had breakfasted, and prepared to cross the ford. A steep bank rising



*The Black Forest. Bushrangers' Haunt in the Digging Days.*



on the other side of the gully, we found it necessary to put three horses to each dray. The second one in crossing got fast in the mud, which caused us several hours' delay. The roads still fair travelling. We passed several licensed public-houses and coffee-shops. These places of refreshment are of very dubious character — many of them traps, the proprietors being in league with bushrangers. On one tent was chalked the following:— ' 'ot Cofy Rady 4s. a cup.' Many of these illiterate rascals are realising £30,000 a year. Many rough-looking chaps passed us today, also several patrols of mounted police. I have stowed away my large notes in what I consider a safe place, viz., into the bowl of a cutty pipe, reserving only a few sovereigns for any freebooters who may bail us up. Money and gold-dust are their objects of plunder: the lowest they will take to allow their victims to pass with a whole skin is three sovereigns; many who could show nothing have had a bullet sent through their right hand. We passed several parties of returning diggers, who gave bad accounts of the mines. They say that the ground is worked out, and that all are leaving; no attention, however, is paid to these reports, favorable or otherwise, as the order of the day here is, *Believe nothing but what you see.*

“We passed over some beautiful grazing country —rich green meadows and level pasturage, with scarcely a tree or bush as far as the eye could reach. By three p.m. we had gone about twenty miles without seeing a drop of water: men and horses were parched. A little farther on, we, as a great favour, procured a small supply from the owner of a tent, at 1s. per pint. Pushing on, we reached a watering-place called Bush Inn, on the borders of the Black Forest, where we camped for the night. This locality is a noted rendezvous for bushrangers. Here there are two licensed public-



houses, and numerous sly grog-shops, a butcher's tent and a blacksmith's shop; the latter charged us only twenty shillings for nailing on a loose shoe of one of our horses. After supper, I turned in under the dray to have a sleep. I had just dozed off when I was roused by someone ordering me out, unless I wished a bullet sent through me—the request being accompanied with an elaborate string of oaths and curses. Wakening my chum, I was meditating on the propriety of serving out the intruder, whose figure I could barely discern in the dark, in his own fashion, when my friend whispered to me that he thought he was one of our drivers, and such he proved to be. The vagabond had got hold of a keg of grog, and had indulged to such an extent that he know not friends from foes. He was within an ace of thrusting his sword through the other driver. With great difficulty and noise, we got him secured under one of the drays."

### **From Golden Gully**

"Golden Gully, near Bendigo, October 31, 1852.—I write you, hoping to find you all in good health, as this leaves us all here at present. We left Melbourne for the Diggings on September 6th, with a party of about one hundred of our ship-mates, nearly all armed with guns and pistols. We posted a letter that would tell you about our safe arrival, after a quick passage of eighty-three days. As we passed the Post-office, we had to leave our boxes at a store, paying 1s. a week per box. We carried nothing with us but two suits of clothes, and provisions for four days. We camped out the first two nights, making our camp of plaid and blankets. The third day we passed through the Black Forest, and one of our mates was attacked by a ruffian, who drew a revolver pistol, loaded. Our mate made a spring, got it by the

middle, kept his hold, and called for assistance. I was about sixty yards before, and I ran back and presented my gun at the fellow's breast. It made him tremble. I assisted my mate, and we took the pistol from him, and then left him.

"There was a police-station about a mile and a half off. When we got there, five of the police and one of our party mounted their horses, and rode back as fast as they could. They caught him and brought him to the station; but as there was no witness to prove that he presented his pistol (I did



*Specking for Gold*

not see him, they were struggling for it when I got to them); they gave him his pistol and set him off again. We stopped at the inns the other three nights. The third night we paid 3s. each for our suppers, and 1s. for sleeping on the floor, the beds being all taken up. The fourth night we paid 3s. 6d. for supper, and 3s. for beds, lying three in a bed. The fifth night we paid 4s. for supper, and

1s. for sleeping in an out-house. After that we thought camping out of doors safer than sleeping at the inns upon the road, for there were three or four robberies where we stayed the last night. We shot some of the most beautiful parrots we ever saw, as we passed along, which was through wood nearly all the way.

“We arrived at Bendigo Diggings on the Saturday afternoon; made a tent with our plaids and blankets for the night. Sunday we had to look for a tent. As we were walking about, we met a party who were going to leave. They had been there three weeks, and had got about £ 2000 for the four of them. We bought their tent and tools, and we are remaining in it yet. Monday we got out licences, and began to work for gold. There were six of us the first four days, and we made £ 1 15s. 5d. per man, but they were the worst days we have had since we came to the Diggings; but we have been getting on better ever since. We thought six too many, so we parted. We are four now. I will give you an account of the gold got by us since we commenced. We have 13 lb. 1 dwt. on hand. Gold is selling at the Diggings at £ 3 5s. 6d. to £ 3 3s. 6d., but we have not sold any except what we got the first four days. We have got altogether since we came £ 521 10s. and we do not intend to sell any more than what will just carry us on, as we intend to return and get a better price for it in England. We have no fear but we can get as much as will keep us in a year or two. Provisions and tools are very high here. It has cost £ 14 per man since we left Melbourne. There are diggings for miles around us. Bendigo is about 120 miles from Melbourne, and the roads are very bad. The Diggings are all covered with wood, fair mahogany. It is a very badly-watered place where we are. We have only seen two streams running since we came . . .

"If we had been here six months sooner, we would have got our fortunes before now, so the diggers tell us, the way we form ourselves. The largest piece of gold we have got is 1½ oz. 1 dwt. We have it in all shapes—some like No. 4 or 6 shot; some like turnip-seed and as round; and some like small smiths' slags. It seems to have been all melted and washed down. Some is mixed with quartz. There have been some rare pieces round here. There was a nugget found 90 lb. weight, in Poverty Gully, about three weeks since. There are some of our shipmates police at 8s. a day and grub, and one half of the fines. They say they make a pound a day. Anybody can get a police spot. There is no drink allowed to be sold at the Diggings; but there are a great many smugglers. The police caught one the other Sunday, just above our tent. They pulled his two tents down—took what he had—handcuffed him to the hind end of a cart, and took him along. I have only had two noblers (as they are called) since I came to the place, and paid 1s. 6d. per nobler. There was a man who would treat me. It is 25s. per bottle . . ."

### **Gold Fever Rages**

"Sydney, Nov. 28, 1852.—The gold-fever appears to be raging all over Scotland and England at a fearful rate, so much so that I fear this country will be the scene of much misery and disappointment ere long. Young men brought up in offices should not come out. There are hundreds such in Sydney now who cannot get employment; and, unless they take their coats off and work at something, why they must starve. The immigration has set in upon us too fast. The country was not in a position to receive so many people so suddenly; and hence the enormous prices for houses and provisions, and indeed almost every article we use.



“Gold-digging is a lottery: for one successful man there are a hundred who get nothing. You read in the papers of the lucky ones; no mention is made of the unfortunates; but if you were here you would both hear and see plenty about them. The lucky gold-diggers cannot spend their money fast enough. Of course, the first step is to get married. The bride is decked out in the most expensive manner possible. They only purchase the highest-priced articles, and spurn the idea of taking back change. They will drive out to Botany Bay, come home all drunk, and wind up with a jolly good fight. The class of men who have generally been lucky are of the lower orders, such as laborers, draymen, bullock-drivers, and so on; and you can easily fancy what happens to men coming into town with a few hundred pounds in their pockets, who never before had many shillings. They get through it in a few weeks, and go off again. Clerks and young gentlemen, generally speaking, are the most unfortunate.”



*Washing Gold*

## **Striking It Rich**

March was in the wane by the time we had sunk no fewer than nine holes, averaging from sixteen to twenty feet, with very indifferent success; but we had now become so inured to toil and disappointment that we worked like beings almost insensible to the influence of any of the passions whatever. . . . At length, however, we were destined to tell another story. The lucky day came at last; and I shall never forget the rush of emotions which filled my breast on striking, nearly at the bottom of one of our holes, a nugget of fourteen pounds weight.

“Gemini!” cried Raikes, letting fall the barrow from his hands at the mouth of the hole, and jumping down with an alacrity which sufficiently evinced the strength of his own feelings on the occasion. “We have it now,” he continued, “and we’ll do well.”

It was true what he said. We found a whole “pocketful” of gold, and for eight consecutive days took from six to eight pounds a day. We had the prudence to keep this extraordinary change of luck quiet, having seen enough of the folly of bruiting abroad any sudden turn of fortune which had befallen a successful party, from the swarms of excavators it immediately brought around them to mine in their neighborhood. We therefore continued to labor with the same persevering and dogged energy which had all along, since our arrival in Bendigo, characterised our proceedings. It was the more easy for us to keep our success quiet, from the fact of there being very few diggers working in the gully in which we were. Not far from us, however, was one family whose example of laborious industry had few parallels in the Diggings. Every morning, by the break of day, they were all hard at work—the father digging, the mother rocking, with a baby in her arms, as

her eldest boy poured the water on the earth, the "toddlin' wee thing" of three years old even helping to bring his share of golden grist to the mill. Such industry could not help being rewarded; and, accordingly, we understood them to be doing well.

When we had fallen upon the auriferous mass at the bottom of our hole, it had the effect of suspending our labors for a few minutes, so commanding were the feelings with which we were severally assailed. These, however, soon subsided, when Brown was despatched with it to our tent, that Binks might, as soon as possible, share in the joy which its discovery gave us. During his absence, Raikes and I continued to follow the vein we had struck; and our amazement increased as we proceeded, from the quantity of smaller pieces which we found. In one spot they were stuck as thick as currants in a rich dumpling, and varying in size from that of a raisin to a pin's head.

"Gold! Gold! Gold!" muttered Raikes, with a kind of hysterical chuckle. "There is nothing like gold; and we will all be independent. Look here, and here, and here! My stars! where will it all end?" he continued, as he speedily picked out several pieces, increasing in size until he came to one as large as a goodly-sized marble. "There—I can go no further! My head is getting giddy"—and he sank back against the wall.

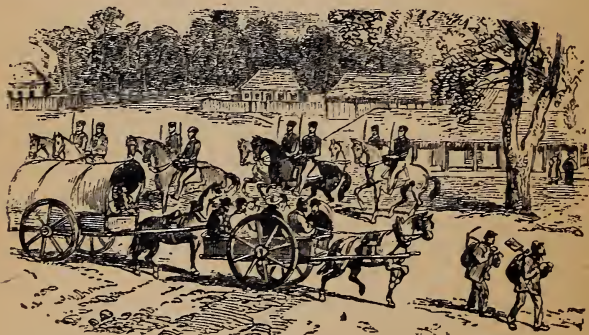
My own feelings, I must confess, were scarcely less agitated. The treasure we had hit upon was so great and so unexpected that we must have been altogether destitute of a nervous system not to have felt considerably moved, particularly when it cost us at the rate of about £15 a week to live where we were. We soon recovered, however, and continued our search until the evening, when we found ourselves in the possession of twenty pounds weight and two ounces.

*"The Gold-finder of Australia"—John Sherer.*

## The Gold Escort

On Friday, March 19, 1852, the first gold escort arrived in Adelaide from Mount Alexander, in command of Capt. A. Tolmer, and this event was a red letter day for South Australia. Hundreds of persons went in the direction of the Glen Osmond Road to get the first glimpse of this intrepid band, and I well remember the singular appearance they presented.

In the midst of a cloud of dust was a spring-cart drawn by four horses, escorted by the gallant leader and four or five mounted troopers with drawn swords — the whole proceeding at a pace



*A Gold Escort*

which indicated that their business was urgent and important. Onward they dashed till they reached the Treasury, in King William Street, where, amid the shouts and cheers of the assembled crowd, upwards of £18,000 worth of gold was deposited. This had been conveyed along a bush track, between 300 and 400 miles, over hills, down gullies, through swamps, across rivers and swollen streams, and along parts of the country where bushrangers might be expected to intercept it. The second escort arrived in Adelaide on May 4,



and brought 1620 lbs. weight of gold, valued at £70,000, sent by 851 diggers.

During the year the probable value of the gold sent by escort and brought by vessels was a million sterling; but what to do with it became a serious question. The banks had been drained of nearly all their coined gold, and to replenish their coffers, as well as to give a representative value to their notes, an admirable plan was devised by Mr George Tinline, manager of the Bank of South Australia, who was assisted by others in maturing it. This plan provided for a Government assay office, in which a standard value was to be given to the gold submitted, and the bullion could then be paid into the banks as coin. The banks, on the other hand, were allowed to issue notes in exact proportion to the bullion owned or held by them. By these means trade and commerce received an impetus beyond the most sanguine expectation of the promoters of the scheme. The Government Assay Office was opened on February 10, 1852, and on that day upwards of £10,000 worth of gold was received for assay.

Previous to the adoption of this plan, many systems had been tried by the trading community, in seeking to maintain something of a circulating medium. A few firms had imported bronze tokens of the face value of a penny; others had printed notes for 2/6, 5/-, and upwards, payable on demand by the issuers—and so long as the respective houses were regarded as solvent, these freely passed. The Assay Office having proved such a success, the Government went still further, and actually opened a miniature Mint, issuing gold tokens of the nominal value of £1, containing more of the precious metal than the ordinary sovereigns. Their actual gold value was upwards of twenty-one shillings.

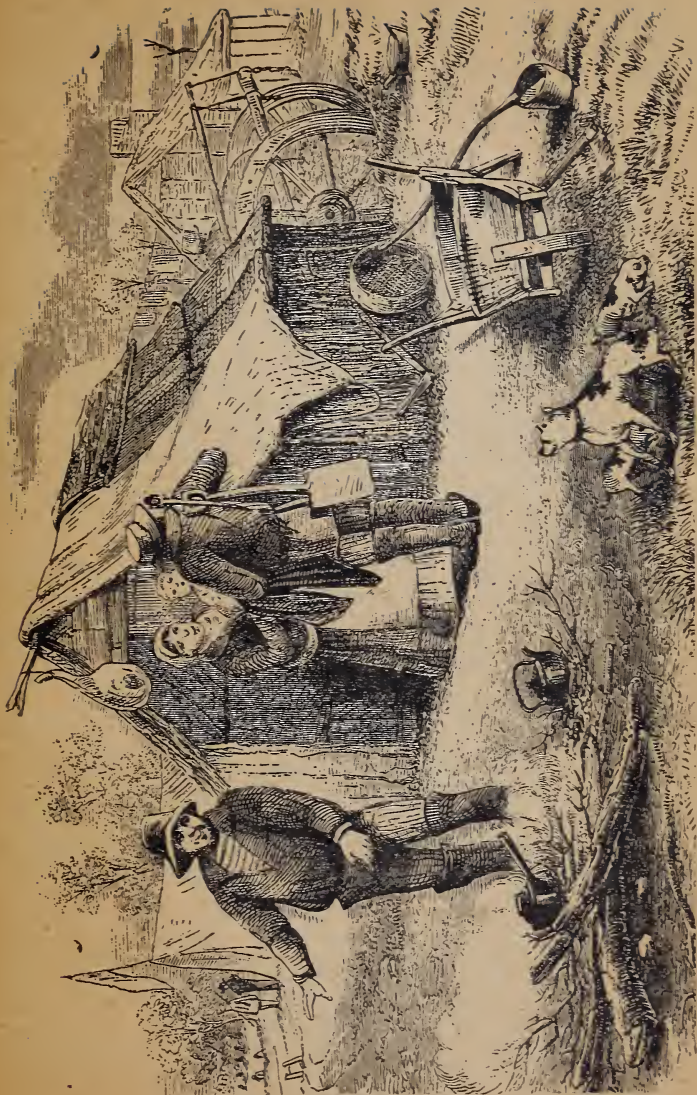
*"Colonial Life and Christian Experience."*—H. Hussey.

## Golden Point

Though we may never know who were the actual discoverers of gold at Golden Point, J. F. C. Merrick claimed to be the first man that ever worked a cradle there. The party consisted of six men, and his mates agreed that he should have the honor. Thomas Dunn, in a letter to another pioneer digger, a member of his party, wrote: "I firmly believe that I, Thomas Dunn, and George Wilson were the first men, and got the first gold, on the little quartz hill now known as Golden Point." Whoever had the right of priority, with the commencement of digging at Golden Point the goldfield of Ballarat was opened.

In his famous "History of Ballarat," first published in 1870, William B. Withers gives the full story of the goldfields and quotes letters written by rival claimants for the honor of discovery, and other diggers. From notes furnished by members of the "Ballarat Courier" staff, after an interview with Teddy Shannahan, he culled the following:—

"My party arrived at Buninyong in 1851, just after Esmond and Dunlop, and we went on to Golden Point a few days afterwards, where we got 8 ozs. from a bucketful of stuff. I saw one poor fellow killed by the fall of a tree, which he had undermined recklessly, so anxious was he to get the gold. One day a commissioner and a trooper demanded my licence, and as I had not one, they took me, with a lot of others, to the camp, where we were guarded by eight or nine blackfellows, and they, with their polished boots, were looking as proud as possible. I got my licence, after telling them my mind, and had to pay £10 in all. We went to Mount Alexander and Fryer's Creek and on to Bendigo. . . . We were the first to sink in Long Gully. At Eaglehawk you could see the gold shining in the heap of dirt, and every man sat on his heap all night with a



*Home Life on the Diggings*



pistol or some weapon in his hand; I thought they would be making picks and shovels of the gold, it was so plentiful. It was there the first nugget was found, and 9 lbs. in weight. We got only £3 an ounce for our gold."

### The Golden Army

Having cleared the city we overtook the golden army of bullock-drays moving northward, surrounded by companies of men and lads; occasionally a female is seen. Four bulldogs pull one carriage, a great dog in the shafts of another, and a man pushing behind at a load of near five hundredweight. Presently the splendid panorama opened to view an extensive sweep of plains, encircled by mountain ranges in the remote distance. Far as the eye can reach, the pilgrimage, its line moving along the undulations, now hid, now rising into view—English and German, Irish and Scotch, Tasmanians . . .

Sixteen drays at Yuilles' Ford, and nearly two hundred people. It is nearly impassable, from the fresh current of yesterday's rain. But the men, tailing on to the ropes by dozens, pull both the horses and carts through. Some there are pulling, some cooking their midday meals, some unloading the drays, some moving off the ground. Over the ford, the road is delightful, the scenery charming, the land more broken, and timbered like a park. Ladioak comes in view, a beautiful ravine, formed by the convergence of several hills, at the base of which the river so winds that it must be crossed thrice.

Where formerly was silence, only broken by the voice of the bell-bird, now bullock-drays, bullocks, and bullock-drivers shouting, roaring, and swearing up the hill, or descending splashing through the once clear stream. On, on until the expanse of Bacchus Marsh opens, until lately a favorite meet of our hounds. . . .



Our tandem dog-cart dashes through gallantly, we reach the Pentland Hills, where another encampment has been formed in the long ravine. We trot on slowly, the moon bright, the sky cloudless, a sharp frost nips the uplands, the campers eating, drinking, and smoking; architects, jewelers, chemists, booksellers, tinker, tailor, and sailor, all cold but cheerful. At the next station we halt and enjoy our friend's fire and supper.

The next morning broke bright and fresh; the ground was white with frost; at daylight the train of pilgrims were crossing the plain—the Germans with wheelbarrows led the way. At Ballan we find the inn eaten out. A horse passes at speed bearing on his back two horsemen. We meet sulky parties of the unsuccessful returning, and see signs in small excavations of prospecting parties. The forest grows denser; toward evening we reach the hospitable roof-tree of Lal Lal, where at daybreak all the laughing jackasses of the colony seemed to have established a representative assembly.

Two miles from Warren Neep the hills begin gradually to slope toward Ballarat. The forest trees are loftier and denser, but the surface soil is not so richly grassed. The road emerges on to a rich bottom of considerable extent, and the hill to the left extends upwards in such a gentle slope as to diminish the appearance of his height. Within a mile and a half of Golden Point the tents begin to peer through the trees. The Black Hill rises precipitously on the right from a creek that washes its base, and through its thick forest covering the road is visible down which the carriers are conveying their earth.

### **Rocking the Cradles**

The bank of the creek is lined with cradles, and the washers are in full operation. Round the base of the mountain, on the further side, at right

angles with this creek, the River Lee flows; and for half a mile along its bank the cradles are at work. We descend, leave the road, cross the bottom, spring over a dam, and are among the workmen. "Rock, rock, rock! Swish, swash, Swish!" Such the universal sound.

The cradle is placed lengthwise with the water. The cradleman, holding the handle in his left hand, with a stick or scraper to break the lumps of earth or stir up the contents, keeps the cradle constantly going. The waterman, standing at the head of the cradle with a ladle of any kind, keeps baling water continuously into it. A third man washes carefully into a large tin dish the deposit that has fallen through the sieves of the cradle on to the boards beneath, carries it into the stream, where he stands knee-deep, and, tilting the dish up under the water, and shaking the contents, the precious metal falls to the bottom, while the earth and sand are washed out by the water.

After long washing the glittering dust is seen along the bottom edges of the dish. This residuum is carefully washed into a pannikin, dried over the fire, and bottled or packed for exportation. Meanwhile the "cradleman" and "waterman" examine the quartz stones in the upper sieve for quartz gold. Occasionally some are found with pieces of quartz adhering, the rest are thrown aside. The cradle filled, the men are at work again, and the rock, rock recommences. On the top of the hill the diggers are hard at work; the carriers descend the steep side, dragging a loaded sled filled with the gold-impregnated earth, some with tin vessels on their heads, others with bags on their backs. The earth thrown down, they re-ascend the toilsome way; and this is the process "from morn till dewy eve."

Returning to the road, the outer encampment this side of Golden Point became visible. A sound is heard like the continuous beat of a thousand

muffled drums, or the rushing of a mighty waterfall. As we issue from the trees the cause is beheld. From the margin of the forest a broad swamp spreads, through which the Lee runs. Over against you the broad shoulder of a bold hill is pushed out to meet its attacking waters, and round its base run the swamp waters, uniting with the river. Along this the cradles are ranged for about half a mile, on both sides of the creek and down the river, forming the letter T with the ends upturned. They are crowded so closely together as barely to permit being worked, in some places in triple file. At this distance you see some of the excavations, and the carriers swarming up and down hill with all sorts of vessels, from the bag to the wheelbarrow. The enormous ant-hive swarms like a railway cutting, where the crown of a hill is carried down to fill a valley.

Higher up the hill's crest, along its sides, and stretching down to the swamp far away to the right and left, are the tents, thickly clustered and pitched, and, far beyond, the lofty white-barked trees form a background. This is Ballarat!

*"Three Colonies of Australia"—Samuel Sidney.*



*Diggers "On the Wallaby"*

## **Australia's Only Rebellion**

*Many accounts of Australia's only Rebellion, the Eureka Stockade, in the fifties, have been published, but mostly they were written long after the event and not by eye witnesses. This is the story of J. D'Ewes, who was police magistrate at Ballarat when the miners made their tragic attempt to resist the military by force of arms. Riots followed on the acquittal of the proprietor of an hotel, his wife and two barmen on charges brought against them in connection with the death of a popular digger named James Scobie, whose body had been found lying within several hundred yards of the hotel. Bentley, the hotel-keeper, was a violent and powerful man, who often rough-handled drunken and troublesome miners when ejecting them from the premises.*

On the outskirts of the diggings, I encountered my servant Edward, who was riding to meet me, and had brought my pistols with him, which he begged me take and make a circuitous route to the camp, as Bentley's hotel had been burnt to the ground, and he feared that the diggers might resort to hostile measures against myself. I was much excited by these tidings, and immediately proceeded to the spot, where a few hours before had stood by far the most extensive buildings in the diggings, painted and decked out in gay and gaudy colors, with a long row of stables and out-houses, erected at an expense of £30,000, and totally uninsured. All that remained of this property were a few smoking embers; nothing had been saved. A high wind blowing, and everything being constructed of wood, a very short period sufficed for its total consumption with all its contents. . . .

Dispatches were immediately sent to Melbourne with an account of the transaction and a request



for an additional force of military and police, and on the following morning some arrests were made of several persons who were observed by the police as ringleaders of the riot on the previous day. These were no sooner brought up to the camp, and lodged in the lock-up house, than we were surrounded by bands of turbulent diggers demanding their release on bail, which they offered to any amount for them. Our position and resources at the camp were, however, too commanding to give us much uneasiness, and we took every means to strengthen our defences in case of an attack, and awaited the arrival of the reinforcements that had been sent for. The local newspapers defended this destruction of the hotel as a just retribution upon Bentley, and the turbulent agitators amongst the diggers became more violent than ever. . . .

Whilst these scenes had been enacting at the camp, a large party of diggers had been for some time past organising their forces, erecting a stockade, and, in fact, making every arrangement for an armed defence, in case they should be attacked on their resisting the payment of the licence-fee, and on the morning in question the party that had been sent out to capture unlicensed diggers, observing these preparations, returned to seek reinforcements.

### **Deadly Volleys**

With the military and police combined there were now upwards of 300 men at the camp, the greater part of which were ordered to the support of the gold commissioners. Upon reaching the stockade an irregular fire was opened upon them, which killed and wounded several, and among the former, Captain Wise of H.M.'s 40th Regiment, who received two balls in the thigh, and subsequently died of his wounds. They returned this with a deadly volley, killing and wounding up-

wards of thirty of the diggers, and made themselves masters of the stockade in a few minutes—the insurgents flying in all directions. A good deal of useless cruelty now ensued from the infuriated police (chiefly Irish) who shot, cut down, and otherwise ill-treated all the diggers they happened to meet, even entering their tents and dragging them out, without any knowledge that they belonged to the insurgent party or not; and a large number of prisoners were made, and conveyed to the lock-up house at the camp.

A great number of foreigners (Americans and Germans) were amongst them, and by far the most violent of the rioters, who now began to see that their resistance to the armed authority was useless, and the dreadful lesson they had received brought them at once to their senses. Very few of the hard-working and fortunate miners had taken any part in this insurrection, either for or against the Government, but had continued their daily avocations, quietly awaiting the result. They had, indeed, invariably refused to act as special constables, urging as a reason for their refusal that it would bring them into unpleasant contact with their neighbors, who entertained different opinions to themselves, as well as the loss of their valuable time.

The prisoners taken at the stockade were secured and sent down to Melbourne for trial, and after these fatal occurrences, everything became quiet. Many families were rendered desolate by the loss and mutilation of fathers and husbands; but the casualties amongst the military and police were very few in comparison with those of the diggers.

A reward of £500 was offered by the Government for the discovery of the murder, or means by which James Scobie came by his death; and at length an Irishman, one of the two men (a

barman of Bentley's) and in confinement with him on a second arrest, volunteered to turn approver, and disclose all the facts of the case; and the testimony of this man was admitted. He stated that on the night in question, and shortly after the disturbance outside the bar, that Bentley and his wife, being very much enraged at the demolition of their windows, in company with his brother-in-law (who was staying in the house) and two barmen, went out by the back of the premises, and intercepted one of the men who had attempted to gain admittance, that an altercation ensued, and that the man was knocked down by one of the barmen, but not by Bentley. That they left him on the ground, not thinking any material injury was done to him, and returned; but that they were so much shocked and alarmed by the body of the same man being subsequently brought into the hotel, that they all agreed to deny all knowledge of the transaction. . . .

At the next session of the criminal court, Bentley and his associates were tried for manslaughter, and with the exception of Mrs Bentley, convicted and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. The ringleaders and most notorious of the rioters also took their trials, and notwithstanding the clear evidence against them, and the remarks of the Attorney-General and the Judge who tried the case, were all acquitted by the Melbourne jury. This was considered rather a singular perversion of justice, but the *vox populi* was all powerful, and the jury *dared* not have found them guilty.

The only person connected with the rioters, who received any punishment, was the editor of the *Ballarat Times*, who was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for publishing seditious and inflammatory articles in his paper.

"China, Australia and the Pacific Islands"—J. D'Ewes.

## **Phenomenal Yields**

At Morley's Find, 120 miles north-west of Kalgoorlie, one of the richest parcels of stone ever treated in Western Australia was obtained in July, 1939; the yield being 1727 ozs. from 12 cwt. of ore. At the end of 1938, a small parcel of ore from the Blue Bird Mines, Norseman, gave an assay result of 7,915 ozs. gold a ton — almost solid gold, when 530 ozs. are yielded by 150 lb. of ore.

When Jim Morley, from the goldfields, dropped in to see his old schoolmate, Arthur Carrot, a struggling farmer at Kellerberrin, W.A., he talked of gold to be won away Outback. Young James, son of Arthur, listened in, and decided that prospecting was better than farming on poor soil. So he became Jim Morley's partner, and the two persuaded a man with money to back them. But six months in the Never Never, fifty miles north of Kalgoorlie, brought very small returns.

The two mates then obtained Government aid, and one day Morley discovered a small, but very rich reef, from which gold to the value of £6000 was taken in a week. This was Morley's Find. James Carrot bought out Morley and presented the £500 share to his father, who had just thrown up the farm. In one year the mine yielded father and son gold worth £50,000. Their last crushing, value £8000, was brought into Kalgoorlie in a kerosene tin. Soon afterwards, Morley's Find was sold to a mining company for £35,000 cash.

An Italian named Giacomo Betti, who owned the Milano Mine, 34 miles to the south of Kalgoorlie, struck a rich reef after a few months' working with two fellow countrymen who toiled for their tucker. Giacomo thought it would be fine to go for a trip to Italy and see his people there. So he gave Muffati and Bertola a quarter interest each in the mine; they to go on working during his absence. His wife was left with his half share.



The mine proved to be a winner, gold worth £80,000 being taken from it before the owners agreed to sell the Milano to a Melbourne mining company for £100,000. Poor Giacomo did not live to enjoy his fortune — he was killed in a motor car accident at Milan.

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and  
Specimens of Gold  
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*An advertisement of the early Fifties.*

## **Lasseter's Golden Cave**

Many expeditions have searched for Lasseter's lost reef, or "Aladdin's Cave." Others may yet be lured into the burning sands of Central Australia on this romantic quest, which already has taken toll of human life.

The story of Harold Lasseter and his fabulously rich reef, has been told in a notable book, "Lasseter's Last Ride," by Ion Idriess, who makes an epic of a true story, and adds a vivid chapter to the history of gold seeking and discovery in Australia. Lasseter's Reef has been twice discovered and twice lost. Today its true location is unknown—except to the ghosts of the men who found it, and perished out in the Never Never country.

Lasseter, the most picturesque of all gold seekers, spent the most of his life prospecting, and, more than fifty years ago, discovered, in Central Australia, a cave which he described as being studded with gold.

In 1930 a Sydney company sent a party with Lasseter on another search expedition, when already many prospectors had sought in vain for "Aladdin's Cave," some leaving their bones to bleach in sun-scorched sand or on stony ridges. The pilots of the expedition's plane were lost for three weeks after making a forced landing, and almost starved to death. Other members of the party were injured in the crash; and the enterprise was abandoned.

But Lasseter himself was not discouraged. He determined to travel on, even if alone, and re-discover the golden cave which he had found in 1893, when only seventeen. Death came very near to the lad on that occasion. He became bushed among the spinifex and mulga scrub, and was raving with thirst when found by an Afghan

camel driver. Years after this terrible experience, Lasseter set out with a surveyor, hopeful of locating the cave of gold. They returned to Carnarvon, West Australia, claiming to have been successful in their quest; but their watches were incorrect, and, therefore, calculations of its position were wrong.

For years Lasseter dreamed of another search, and eventually left Sydney on that ill-fated expedition by aeroplane. When the others returned, Lasseter and a dingo trapper, named Johns, remained to continue the search on their own account. They pushed on, and when Lasseter recognised landmarks, his mate started back for Alice Springs to report their partial success.

Left alone, Lasseter, we may imagine, was happy enough until his camels bolted. His plight was desperate then. What hope had a man afoot in that dreadful country, without water, which must be carried there in fantassies on camel-back since only the aborigines know where the rock-holes are.

It is believed that Lasseter found his lost reef, or golden cave, before he wandered hopelessly around, in fear of the blacks, daily becoming weaker, until he fell in with a tribe, which gave him food and a little water. But eventually they abandoned him, and soon afterwards he died of starvation. In March, 1931, his body was found by R. Buck, who had been engaged to search for the missing prospector. After burying the body, Buck, with the help of the blacks, discovered Lasseter's old camps, and picked up relics, including a broken camera and a note, in which the dead man's last wishes were expressed. Lasseter made entries in a small note-book, which the present writer has seen. From this pitiful relic, and messages buried beneath the ashes of his campfires, the story of Lasseter's last quest for "Aladdin's Cave" has been pieced together.

## **The Golden West**

By the power of gold Western Australia was saved from being a Rip Van Winkle land. Until 1890, the colony had been, if not asleep, in a state of arrested growth. Few were conscious of the vast potential wealth of the West, and sixty years after the establishment of Swan River Colony, the largest of the six States of the Commonwealth had a population of less than 50,000 persons. Followed the Golden Decade.

In 1900 the population was 180,000, an increase of nearly 300 per cent. At the inception of responsible Government in 1890, the colony's revenue amounted to £414,314; for the 1899-1900 period it was £2,875,396. To gold this astonishing progress was due. By happy chance, the discovery of Western Australia's vast auriferous resources was made when the colony attained self-government.

Gold was discovered at Kimberley, in the far North-West, in 1885, and the first gold rush of the West took place. That pioneer goldfield flourished—and declined. But it had attracted thousands of gold seekers to the West, and ere long prospectors were scattered over the inland country, from the Kimberleys to Yilgarn. In 1887, the Yilgarn goldfield was discovered; in 1888, the Pilbara field, and in 1891, the Murchison. A mining industry had been established in a moderate way. But another year passed before the word "Coolgardie" became familiar to all the world. In April, 1892, Bayley and Ford made their amazing discovery in a wilderness of sand and desert plants. The two adventurous miners had travelled out east from Southern Cross, centre of Yilgarn goldfield, on a prospecting expedition.

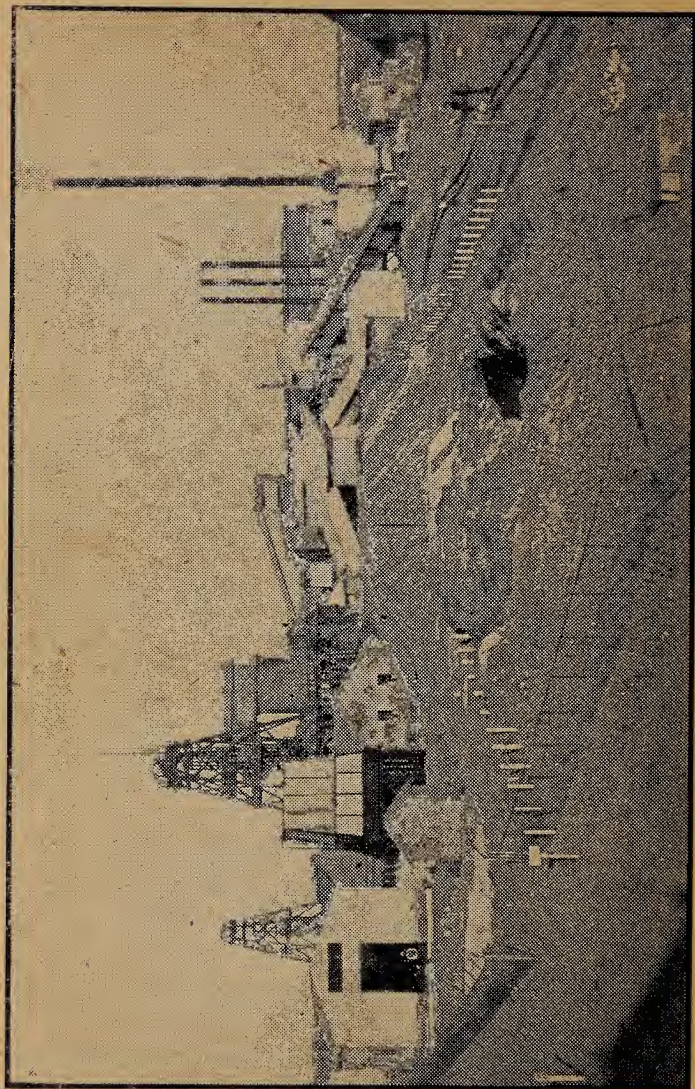


“Over the wilds they pursued their quest, and, as if by a miracle, camped on a spot, the richness of which was in a few months to throw the Australian people almost off their balance. Specking across the adjacent flats, they found abundant traces of alluvial gold, and in two or three weeks had specked and dryblown over 200 ozs. Running short of supplies, they made back to Southern Cross, but immediately returned to the scene of their find. On the evening of regaining their camp they attacked the cap of a reef with a tomahawk, and lo! it was as though they had broken the seal of King Solomon’s Mines. In the space of a few hours they chopped off the surface of the earth solid chunks of bullion, weighing in one instance 50 ozs., and giving them a parcel of 500 ozs. of almost pure gold. As the total result of their evening’s inquisitiveness Coolgardie was discovered.” (“Western Australia: An Official Handbook,” 1925.)

The news spread throughout Western and Eastern Australia, and thousands of men came flocking to the new Land of Ophir. Coolgardie’s almost fabulous riches in the ground lured men from the ends of the earth. “All that had been denied to Western Australia in the past—attention, population, and capital—the world now stumbled over itself to give. . . . Money flowed into the country in millions.”

The enormous production of gold from Bayley’s Reward mine was due, in the early stages, to only five men, including three of the shareholders. In his book, “Spinifex and Sand,” the Hon. David Carnegie, who was early on the field, quotes a letter from Everard Browne to Lord Douglas, who came to the West with Carnegie in 1892:

“I am just taking 4200 ozs. over to Melbourne from our reef (Bayley’s). This makes 10,000 ozs.



*Boulder Perseverance Gold Mine, Kalgoorlie.*

Stuart Gore, photo.

we have brought down from our reef without a battery, or machinery equal to treating 200 lbs. of stone per day; that is a bit of a record for you! . . . If you are speaking about this 10,000 ozs. . . . remember that Bayley and Ford dollied out 2500 ozs. for themselves before they handed it over to us on February 27th last, so that actually 12,500 ozs. have been taken out of the claim, without a battery, in under nine months."

Arthur Bayley, in his account of the great discovery, says that one morning before breakfast, while going after horses, he picked up a nugget weighing half an ounce, and before dinner found 20 more ounces in the same way. The spot where the first find was made was about 200 miles from the Reward Claim, pegged out as a prospecting area when the reef was found, by fossicking around. In one day 300 ozs. was obtained from the cap of the reef. Coolgardie city is Bayley's memorial. He died at Melbourne in 1897, being then only 34 years of age.

### **The Golden Mile**

A year after Bayley's find came the marvellous news of Kalgoorlie, destined, with its "Golden Mile," to outshine Coolgardie though the earlier field continued to produce great wealth. Paddy Hannan was the lucky prospector, who discovered gold at Kalgoorlie in June, 1893. A tree growing on the spot has been fenced round, and a notice-board tells the story "in a nutshell." In Western Australia's Centenary year, a Hannan memorial fountain was erected by public subscription in the city, whose main thoroughfare is named Hannan Street.

From the Western State's mines more than £200,000,000 worth of gold has been taken, and the Golden Mile at Kalgoorlie has contributed more than one half of it. They shine like golden



stars, the names of mines which form the Golden Mile: Great Boulder, Lake View, Ivanhoe, Boulder Perseverance, Hannan's Reward, The Golden Horseshoe, The Australia Mine (Associated), and others.

"It is almost impossible to describe in words the wonders of the golden hills on which these wonderful mines are placed," wrote May Vivienne, who visited Kalgoorlie more than forty years ago.

Kalgoorlie, the world's richest goldfield, was discovered as the result of some prospectors becoming lost in the unknown country near Yerilla. A large number of miners set out from Coolgardie in search of the missing men. Shortage of water held them up, and they camped above hidden treasure—gold in such quantities as old prospectors dream of. When rain fell, the search was continued, but Paddy Hannan and his mate, Harrigan, stayed behind and commenced specking for gold. In a few days they possessed nearly 100 ozs. With this proof of a rich field, they returned to Coolgardie, and obtained rights over an area equal to ten alluvial claims. A rush to Kalgoorlie peopled that hitherto uninhabited region with several thousands of gold seekers. Many were lucky; more failed to strike it rich. But Hannan's claim proved to be a Bonanza. From four tons of stone 9000 ozs. of gold were obtained. Only three miles distant from Hannan's find, a still richer discovery was made. The first claim there was named the Great Boulder. Another find was the Londonderry, where thousands of ounces were dollied from surface ground.

Lake View and Star, of the Golden Mile, ranks among the great gold mines of the world. During three recent years nearly 500,000 ozs., worth more than £4,000,000, has been won from this wonderful mine.



## **Romance of Mount Morgan— and William D'Arcy**

Mount Morgan has been called the richest mountain in the world. During the period of forty-one years of active operations under the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company, it was the world's most prolific gold-bearing mine. More than 9,307,000 tons of ore were treated, and over 4,363,000 tons of waste removed for a production exceeding 5,345,000 fine ounces of gold, and 140,000 tons of copper. At the time, the total value of this production was more than £33,000,000; and of this amount £9,000,000 was paid in dividends, the balance being expended on wages, equipment, and so forth.

To the end of 1937, Mount Morgan mine had produced 5,498,931 fine ounces of gold and 145,351 tons of copper. Mount Morgan Limited was formed in 1929 with the object of mining ore left behind by the original company, which went into voluntary liquidation in 1927, when the mine was flooded, following an underground fire during a strike period.

Present mining operations are by open cut. Virtually, the mountain is being hollowed out leaving a huge crater from which millions of tons of ore and overburden have been removed since these operations commenced in 1932. Deepest bench in the open cut is 450 feet. Below this are "glory holes."

Back in the eighties of last century, gold was first discovered on Gordon's Freehold (to become known the world over as Mount Morgan) by W. M. McKinlay, a stockman employed on Calliungal station. Later the area was pegged out by the Morgan brothers, who formed a syndicate comprising themselves and Messrs. W. K. D'Arcy, T. S. Hall, and J. Pattison. In 1886 the Mount

Morgan Gold Mining Company was registered to carry out mining on a large scale.

These and many other facts are set out in a pictorial booklet issued by the management to Mount Morgan shareholders several years ago.

The romance of Mount Morgan is linked with the romantic career of a lawyer named William Knox D'Arcy, who had settled at Rockhampton and was shown by a client, Sandy Morgan, a piece of gold-bearing stone. D'Arcy became a member of the Mount Morgan Syndicate—and eventually, it is said, a millionaire. Oil also interested him, and he searched for it vainly in Australia. But in Persia he met a young native of the country who convinced him that oil trickled from springs in the land of the Shahs.

The erstwhile lawyer, who had an engineering bent, discovered oil seepages; but when he tried to set oil flowing he met with disastrous difficulties. When his own fortune and other capital had been expended, he abandoned drilling, and turned to railway construction. He built a railway for the Shah of Persia, and in return received not only a very large sum of money, but a concession over 500,000 square miles of Persian lands, with permission to drill for, produce, and pipe oil from the vast area. The concession was for sixty years, from 1901.

William D'Arcy struck oil—a gusher near the ruins of Solomon's Temple, to the north of Shustar. Foreign concerns made tempting offers, but D'Arcy would allow only British capital to be invested in his find. And yet, it took him many years to interest Britain. It was not until 1909 that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (now the Anglo-Iranian) was formed with the small capital, for such a huge undertaking, of £ 2,000,000.

Five years later D'Arcy, convinced that Britain needed her own oil supplies for defence purposes, approached Admiral Fisher, who went to Winston

Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty. After an official examination of the potential oil-field had been made, the British Government, against its will and under the strong advocacy of Churchill, entered into a contract with William D'Arcy's company, and invested £2,000,000 in it. That was in July, 1914, two weeks before the outbreak of the last war.

D'Arcy died in 1917. From his original gusher 7,000,000 tons of oil was obtained before the well was closed down to conserve gas.

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*Gold Buyers' Advertisements in 1852.*

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## **Prophecy of the Press**

We (the people of Melbourne) are, many of us, fearful that, because gold has been discovered some hundreds of miles away, our splendid pastures will smile no more, our oxen no more be strong to labour, that our sheep and cattle will diminish, our streets be desolate, and we ourselves be constrained to hunt for shining particles of dust in a barren and thirsty land, or lead a Robinson Crusoe kind of existence, living in solitude upon sheep that own no shepherd, and cattle that have none to tend them. For ourselves, we are under no alarm, and as we would talk cheerfully and hopefully to a dispirited friend, whom we believe to be morbidly depressed so will we talk over this matter with you, our gentle public, fully meeting and discussing every point on which you are apprehensive.

We admit that the gold discovery is, in its immediate results, highly inconvenient. We live in a thriving and happy land, where there is no surplus population, where every man is, or if he choose may be, of some value to his fellow man—where we cannot afford to part with one well-ordered person—it may be that, for a time, the labour required for our city, our towns, and our stations, already insufficiently supplied, will become much scarcer, and that a check will of necessity be put upon every work that is not absolutely indispensable. . . .

Now to apply all we have urged upon our readers, to the great subject, of which we as a people are absorbed in the consideration, we believe that the existence of the Bathurst gold-field has been providentially revealed, so as to attract to this thinly populated continent, the people it is capable of supporting in happiness and comfort. We believe that myriads will hasten thither, allured by the prospect of metallic wealth, who



will find, when they arrive, occupations more fitting to their characters, and more useful to their countrymen, than that of mere metallic accumulation—we believe that gold will be found in sufficient abundance to procure for this favored land in rich profusion, all the comforts and elegances of civilised life in addition to the more primary blessings, which are now within the reach of us all; that the treasures we have laid open, will be sufficiently abundant to gratify every reasonable desire, but not so enormous as to produce, as some prognosticate, surfeit and death. For our own colony—our own Victoria, *even though no goldfield be discovered within her fertile territory*, possessing as we do, the means of creating to an almost indefinite extent, that for which gold is freely given, accompanied by the inestimable blessing of a splendid climate and lovely scenery, it would be a libel upon our nature, not to believe that it will possess attractions, which will outweigh in permanency those of the land of ore. We are strong in faith as to the almost immediate advent of an era in our history, which will shine with a brilliance, that will utterly pale that, which even now is sufficiently strong to attract the attention of a civilised world. . . .

We believe that the discovery of gold in Australia will immensely augment the exchangeable power of the real wealth of Victoria; and that, as a necessary consequence, it will, not only greatly increase the prosperity of our own colony, but add materially to the welfare of the world . . .

*“Illustrated Australian Magazine,” June, 1851.*



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